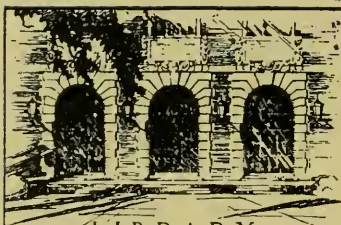


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CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY, W.

HEART AND SCIENCE

A STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME

BY

WILKIE COLLINS



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1883

LONDON : PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
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HEART AND SCIENCE.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE next day—the important Tuesday of the lecture on Matter; the delightful Tuesday of Teresa's arrival—brought with it special demands on Carmina's pen.

Her first letter was addressed to Frances. It was frankly and earnestly written; entreating Miss Minerva to appoint a place at which they might meet, and assuring her, in the most affectionate terms, that she was still loved, trusted, and admired by her faithful friend. Helped by her steadier flow of spirits, Carmina could now see all that was worthiest of sym-

pathy and admiration, all that claimed loving submission and allowance from herself, in the sacrifice to which Miss Minerva had submitted. How bravely the poor governess had controlled the jealous misery that tortured her! How nobly she had renounced Carmina's friendship for Carmina's sake!

Later in the day, Marceline took the letter to the flower shop, and placed it herself under the cord of one of the boxes—still waiting to be claimed.

The second letter filled many pages, and occupied the remainder of the morning.

With the utmost delicacy, but with perfect truthfulness at the same time, Carmina revealed to her betrothed husband the serious reasons which had forced her to withdraw herself from his mother's care. Bound to speak at last in her own defence, she felt that concealments and compromises would be alike unworthy of Ovid and of herself. What she had already

written to Teresa, she now wrote again—with but one modification. She expressed herself forbearingly towards Ovid's mother. The closing words of the letter were worthy of Carmina's gentle, just, and generous nature.

‘ You will perhaps say, Why do I only hear now of all that you have suffered? My love, I have longed to tell you of it! I have even taken up my pen to begin. But I thought of *you*, and put it down again. How selfish, how cruel, to hinder your recovery by causing you sorrow and suspense—to bring you back perhaps to England before your health was restored! I don't regret the effort that it has cost me to keep silence. My only sorrow in writing to you is, that I must speak of your mother in terms which may lower her in her son's estimation.’

Joseph brought the luncheon up to Carmina's room.

The mistress was still at her studies; the

master had gone to his club. As for the girls, their only teacher for the present was the teacher of music. When the ordeal of the lecture and the discussion had been passed, Mrs. Gallilee threatened to take Miss Minerva's place herself, until a new governess could be found. For once, Maria and Zo showed a sisterly similarity in their feelings. It was hard to say which of the two looked forward to her learned mother's instruction with the greatest terror.

Carmina heard the pupils at the piano, while she was eating her luncheon. The profanation of music ceased, when she went into the bedroom to get ready for her daily drive.

She took her letter, duly closed and stamped, downstairs with her—to be sent to the post with the other letters of the day, placed in the hall-basket. In the weakened state of her nerves, the effort that she had made in writing to Ovid had shaken her. Her heart beat un-

easily ; her knees trembled, as she descended the stairs.

Arrived in sight of the hall, she discovered a man walking slowly to and fro. He turned towards her as she advanced, and disclosed the detestable face of Mr. Le Frank.

The music-master's last reserves of patience had come to an end. Watch for them as he might, no opportunities had presented themselves of renewing his investigation in Carmina's room. In the interval that had passed, his hungry suspicion of her had been left to feed on itself. The motives for that incomprehensible attempt to make a friend of him remained hidden in as thick a darkness as ever. Victim of adverse circumstances, he had determined (with the greatest reluctance) to take the straightforward course. Instead of secretly getting his information from Carmina's journals and letters, he was now reduced to openly applying for enlightenment to Carmina herself.

Occupying, for the time being, the position of an honourable man, he presented himself at cruel disadvantage. He was not master of his own glorious voice ; he was without the self-possession indispensable to the perfect performance of his magnificent bow. ‘I have waited to have a word with you,’ he began abruptly, ‘before you go out for your drive.’

Already unnerved, even before she had seen him—painfully conscious that she had committed a serious error, on the last occasion when they had met, in speaking at all—Carmina neither answered him nor looked at him. She bent her head confusedly, and advanced a little nearer to the house door.

He at once moved so as to place himself in her way.

‘I must request you to call to mind what passed between us,’ he resumed, ‘when we met by accident some little time since.’

He had speculated on frightening her. His

insolence stirred her spirit into asserting itself. 'Let me by, if you please,' she said; 'the carriage is waiting for me.'

'The carriage can wait a little longer,' he answered coarsely. 'On the occasion to which I have referred, you were so good as to make advances, to which I cannot consider myself as having any claim. Perhaps you will favour me by stating your motives?'

'I don't understand you, sir.'

'Oh, yes—you do!'

She stepped back, and laid her hand on the bell which rang below stairs, in the pantry. 'Must I ring?' she said.

It was plain that she would do it, if he moved a step nearer to her. He drew aside—with a look which made her tremble. On passing the hall-table, she placed her letter in the post-basket. His eye followed it, as it left her hand: he became suddenly penitent and polite. 'I am sorry if I have alarmed you,' he

said, and opened the house-door for her—without showing himself to Marceline and the coachman outside.

The carriage having been driven away, he softly closed the door again, and returned to the hall-table. He looked into the post-basket.

Was there any danger of discovery by the servants? The footman was absent, attending his mistress on her way to the lecture. None of the female servants were on the stairs. He took up Carmina's letter, and looked at the address: *To Ovid Vere, Esq.*

His eyes twinkled furtively; his excellent memory for injuries reminded him that Ovid Vere had formerly endeavoured (without even caring to conceal it) to prevent Mrs. Gallilee from engaging him as her music-master. By subtle links of its own forging, his vindictive nature now connected his hatred of the person to whom the letter was addressed, with his

interest in stealing the letter itself for the possible discovery of Carmina's secrets. The clock told him that there was plenty of time to open the envelope, and (if the contents proved to be of no importance) to close it again, and take it himself to the post. After a last look round, he withdrew undiscovered, with the letter in his pocket.

On its way back to the house, the carriage was passed by a cab, with a man in it, driven at such a furious rate that there was a narrow escape of collision. The maid screamed ; Carmina turned pale ; the coachman wondered why the man in the cab was in such a hurry. The man was Mr. Mool's head clerk, charged with news for Doctor Benjulia.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE mind of the clerk's master had been troubled by serious doubts, after Carmina left his house on Sunday.

Her agitated manner, her strange questions, and her abrupt departure, all suggested to Mr. Mool's mind some rash project in contemplation—perhaps even the plan of an elopement. To most other men, the obvious course to take would have been to communicate with Mrs. Gallilee. But the lawyer preserved a vivid remembrance of the interview which had taken place at his office. The detestable pleasure which Mrs. Gallilee had betrayed in profaning the memory of Carmina's mother, had so shocked and disgusted him, that he recoiled

from the idea of holding any further intercourse with her, no matter how pressing the emergency might be. It was possible, after what had passed, that Carmina might feel the propriety of making some explanation by letter. He decided to wait until the next morning, on the chance of hearing from her.

On the Monday, no letter arrived.

Proceeding to the office, Mr. Mool found, in his business-correspondence, enough to occupy every moment of his time. He had purposed writing to Carmina, but the idea was now inevitably pressed out of his mind. It was only at the close of the day's work that he had leisure to think of a matter of greater importance—that is to say, of the necessity of discovering Benjulia's friend of other days, the Italian teacher Baccani. He left instructions with one of his clerks to make inquiries, the next morning, at the shops of foreign book-sellers. There, and there only, the question

might be answered, whether Baccani was still living, and living in London.

The inquiries proved successful. On Tuesday afternoon, Baccani's address was in Mr. Mool's hands.

Busy as he still was, the lawyer set aside his own affairs, in deference to the sacred duty of defending the memory of the dead, and to the pressing necessity of silencing Mrs. Galilee's cruel and slanderous tongue. Arrived at Baccani's lodgings, he was informed that the language-master had gone to his dinner at a neighbouring restaurant. Mr. Mool waited at the lodgings, and sent a note to Baccani. In ten minutes more he found himself in the presence of an elderly man, of ascetic appearance ; whose looks and tones showed him to be apt to take offence on small provocation, and more than half ready to suspect an eminent solicitor of being a spy.

But Mr. Mool's experience was equal to the

call on it. Having fully explained the object that he had in view, he left the apology for his intrusion to be inferred, and concluded by appealing, in his own modest way, to the sympathy of an honourable man.

Silently forming his opinion of the lawyer, while he listened, Baccani expressed the conclusion at which he had arrived, in these terms :

‘My experience of mankind, sir, has been a bitterly bad one. You have improved my opinion of human nature since you entered this room. That is not a little thing to say, at my age and in my circumstances.’

He bowed gravely, and turned to his bed. From under it, he pulled out a clumsy tin box. Having opened the rusty lock with some difficulty, he produced a ragged pocket-book, and picked out from it a paper which looked like an old letter.

‘There,’ he said, handing the paper to Mr.

Mool, 'is the statement which vindicates this lady's reputation. Before you open the manuscript I must tell you how I came by it.'

He appeared to feel such embarrassment in approaching the subject, that Mr. Mool interposed.

'I am already acquainted,' he said, 'with some of the circumstances to which you are about to allude. I happen to know of the wager in which the calumny originated, and of the manner in which that wager was decided. The events which followed are the only events that I need trouble you to describe.'

Baccani's grateful sense of relief avowed itself without reserve. 'I feel your kindness,' he said, 'almost as keenly as I feel my own disgraceful conduct, in permitting a woman's reputation to be made the subject of a wager. From whom did you obtain your information?'

'From the person who mentioned your name to me—Doctor Benjulia.'

Baccani lifted his hand with a gesture of angry protest.

‘Don’t speak of him again in my presence!’ he burst out. ‘That man has insulted me. When I took refuge from political persecution in this country, I sent him my prospectus. From my own humble position as a teacher of languages, I looked up without envy to his celebrity among doctors; I thought I might remind him, not unfavourably, of our early friendship—I, who had done him a hundred kindnesses in those past days. He has never taken the slightest notice of me; he has not even acknowledged the receipt of my prospectus. Despicable wretch! Let me hear no more of him.’

‘Pray forgive me if I refer to him again—for the last time,’ Mr. Mool pleaded. ‘Did your acquaintance with him continue, after the question of the wager had been settled?’

‘No, sir!’ Baccani answered sternly.

‘When I was at leisure to go to the club at which we were accustomed to meet, he had left Rome. From that time to this—I rejoice to say it—I have never set eyes on him.’

The obstacles which had prevented the refutation of the calumny from reaching Ben-julia were now revealed. Mr. Mool had only to hear, next, how that refutation had been obtained. A polite hint sufficed to remind Baccani of the explanation that he had promised.

‘I am naturally suspicious,’ he began abruptly ; ‘and I doubted the woman when I found that she kept her veil down. Besides, it was not in my way of thinking to believe that an estimable married lady could have compromised herself with a scoundrel, who had boasted that she was his mistress. I waited in the street, until the woman came out. I followed her, and saw her meet a man. The two went together to a theatre. I took my

place near them. She lifted her veil as a matter of course. My suspicion of foul play was instantly confirmed. When the performance was over, I traced her back to Mr. Robert Graywell's house. He and his wife were both absent at a party. I was too indignant to wait till they came back. Under the threat of charging the wretch with stealing her mistress's clothes, I extorted from her the signed confession which you have in your hand. She was under notice to leave her place for insolent behaviour. The personation which had been intended to deceive me, was an act of revenge; planned between herself and the blackguard who had employed her to make his lie look like truth. A more shameless creature I never met with. She said to me, 'I am as tall as my mistress, and a better figure; and I've often worn her fine clothes on holiday occasions.' In your country, Mr. Mool, such women—so I am told—are ducked

in a pond. There is one thing more to add, before you read the confession. Mrs. Robert Graywell did imprudently send the man some money—in answer to a begging letter artfully enough written to excite her pity. A second application was refused by her husband. What followed on that, you know already.’

Having read the confession, Mr. Mool was permitted to take a copy, and to make any use of it which he might think desirable. His one remaining anxiety was to hear what had become of the person who had planned the deception. ‘Surely,’ he said, ‘that villain has not escaped punishment?’

Baccani answered this in his own bitter way.

‘My dear sir, how can you ask such a simple question? That sort of man always escapes punishment. In the last extreme of poverty his luck provides him with somebody to cheat. Common respect for Mrs. Robert

Graywell closed my lips ; and I was the only person acquainted with the circumstances. I wrote to our club declaring the fellow to be a cheat—and leaving it to be inferred that he cheated at cards. He knew better than to insist on my explaining myself—he resigned, and disappeared. I dare say he is living still—living in clover on some unfortunate woman. The beautiful and the good die untimely deaths. *He*, and his kind, last and live.’

Mr. Mool had neither time nor inclination to plead in favour of the more hopeful view, which believes in the agreeable fiction called ‘poetical justice.’ He tried to express his sense of obligation at parting. Baccani refused to listen.

‘The obligation is all on my side,’ he said. ‘As I have already told you, your visit has added a bright day to my calendar. In our pilgrimage, my friend, through this world of rogues and fools, we may never meet again.’

Let us remember gratefully that we *have* met.
Farewell.'

So they parted.

Returning to his office, Mr. Mool attached to the copy of the confession a brief statement of the circumstances under which the Italian had become possessed of it. He then added these lines, addressed to Benjulia:—'*You* set the false report afloat. I leave it to your sense of duty, to decide whether you ought not to go at once to Mrs. Gallilee, and tell her that the slander which you repeated is now proved to be a lie. If you don't agree with me, I must go to Mrs. Gallilee myself. In that case please return, by the bearer, the papers which are enclosed.'

The clerk instructed to deliver these documents, within the shortest possible space of time, found Mr. Mool waiting at the office, on his return. He answered his master's inquiries by producing Benjulia's reply.

The doctor's amiable humour was still in

the ascendant. His success in torturing his unfortunate cook had been followed by the receipt of a telegram from his friend at Montreal, containing this satisfactory answer to his question:—‘Not brain disease.’ With his mind now set completely at rest, his instincts as a gentleman were at full liberty to control him. ‘I entirely agree with you,’ he wrote to Mr. Mool. ‘I go back with your clerk; the cab will drop me at Mrs. Gallilee’s house.’

Mr. Mool turned to the clerk.

‘Did you wait to hear if Mrs. Gallilee was at home?’ he asked.

‘Mrs. Gallilee was absent, sir—attending a lecture.’

‘What did Doctor Benjulia do?’

‘Went into the house, to wait her return.’

CHAPTER XLIV.

MRS. GALLILEE'S page (attending to the house-door, in the footman's absence) had just shown Benjulia into the library, when there was another ring at the bell. The new visitor was Mr. Le Frank. He appeared to be in a hurry. Without any preliminary questions, he said, 'Take my card to Mrs. Gallilee.'

'My mistress is out, sir.'

The music-master looked impatiently at the hall-clock. The hall-clock answered him by striking the half hour after five.

'Do you expect Mrs. Gallilee back soon?'

'We don't know, sir. The footman had his orders to be in waiting with the carriage, at five.'

After a moment of irritable reflection, Mr. Le Frank took a letter from his pocket. ‘Say that I have an appointment, and am not able to wait. Give Mrs. Gallilee that letter the moment she comes in.’ With those directions he left the house.

The page looked at the letter. It was sealed; and, over the address, two underlined words were written :—‘Private. Immediate.’ Mindful of visits from tradespeople, anxious to see his mistress, and provided beforehand with letters to be delivered immediately, the boy took a pecuniary view of Mr. Le Frank’s errand at the house. ‘Another of them,’ he thought, ‘wanting his money.’

As he placed the letter on the hall-table, the library door opened, and Benjulia appeared—weary already of waiting, without occupation, for Mrs. Gallilee’s return.

‘Is smoking allowed in the library?’ he asked.

The page looked up at the giant towering over him, with the envious admiration of a short boy. He replied with a discretion beyond his years: ‘Would you please step into the smoking-room, sir?’

‘Anybody there?’

‘My master, sir.’

Benjulia at once declined the invitation to the smoking-room. ‘Anybody else at home?’ he inquired.

Miss Carmina was upstairs—the page answered. ‘And I think,’ he added, ‘Mr. Null is with her.’

‘Who’s Mr. Null?’

‘The doctor, sir.’

Benjulia declined to disturb the doctor. He tried a third, and last question.

‘Where’s Zo?’

‘Here!’ cried a shrill voice from the upper regions. ‘Who are You?’

To the page’s astonishment, the giant-gen-

tleman with the resonant bass voice answered this quite gravely. 'I'm Benjulia,' he said.

'Come up !' cried Zo.

Benjulia ascended the stairs.

'Stop !' shouted the voice from above.

Benjulia stopped.

'Have you got your big stick ?'

'Yes.'

'Bring it up with you.' Benjulia retraced his steps into the hall. The page respectfully handed him his stick. Zo became impatient. 'Look sharp !' she called out.

Benjulia obediently quickened his pace. Zo left the schoolroom (in spite of the faintly-heard protest of the maid in charge) to receive him on the stairs. They met on the landing, outside Carmina's room. Zo possessed herself of the bamboo cane, and led the way in. 'Carmina ! here's the big stick, I told you about,' she announced.

'Whose stick, dear ?'

Zo returned to the landing. ‘Come in, Benjulia,’ she said—and seized him by the coat-tails. Mr. Null rose instinctively. Was this his celebrated colleague?

With some reluctance, Carmina appeared at the door; thinking of the day when Ovid had fainted, and when the great man had treated her so harshly. In fear of more rudeness, she unwillingly asked him to come in.

Still immovable on the landing, he looked at her in silence.

The serious question occurred to him which had formerly presented itself to Mr. Mool. Had Mrs. Gallilee repeated, in Carmina’s presence, the lie which slandered her mother’s memory—the lie which he was then in the house to expose?

Watching Benjulia respectfully, Mr. Null saw, in that grave scrutiny, an opportunity of presenting himself under a favourable light. He waved his hand persuasively towards Car-

mina. ‘Some nervous prostration, sir, in my interesting patient, as you no doubt perceive,’ he began. ‘Not such rapid progress towards recovery as I had hoped. I think of recommending the air of the seaside.’ Benjulia’s dreary eyes turned on him slowly, and estimated his mental calibre at its exact value, in a moment. Mr. Null felt that look in the very marrow of his bones. He bowed with servile submission, and took his leave.

In the meantime, Benjulia had satisfied himself that the embarrassment in Carmina’s manner was merely attributable to shyness. She was now no longer an object even of momentary interest to him. He was ready to play with Zo—but not on condition of amusing himself with the child, in Carmina’s presence. ‘I am waiting till Mrs. Gallilee returns,’ he said to her in his quietly indifferent way. ‘If you will excuse me, I’ll go downstairs again ; I won’t intrude.’

Her pale face flushed as she listened to him. Innocently supposing that she had made her little offer of hospitality in too cold a manner, she looked at Benjulia with a timid and troubled smile. 'Pray wait here till my aunt comes back,' she said. 'Zo will amuse you, I'm sure.' Zo seconded the invitation by hiding the stick, and laying hold again on her big friend's coat-tails.

He let the child drag him into the room, without noticing her. The silent questioning of his eyes had been again directed to Carmina, at the moment when she smiled.

His long and terrible experience made its own merciless discoveries, in the nervous movement of her eyelids and her lips. The poor girl, pleasing herself with the idea of having produced the right impression on him at last, had only succeeded in becoming an object of medical inquiry, pursued in secret. When he companionably took a chair by her side, and

let Zo climb on his knee, he was privately regretting his cold reception of Mr. Null. Under certain conditions of nervous excitement, Carmina might furnish an interesting case. 'If I had been commonly civil to that fawning idiot,' he thought, 'I might have been called into consultation.'

They were all three seated—but there was no talk. Zo set the example.

'You haven't tickled me yet,' she said. 'Show Carmina how you do it.'

He gravely operated on the back of Zo's neck; and his patient acknowledged the process with a wriggle and a scream. The performance being so far at an end, Zo called to the dog, and issued her orders once more.

'Now make Tinker kick his leg!'

Benjulia obeyed once again. The young tyrant was not satisfied yet.

'Now tickle Carmina!' she said.

He heard this without laughing: his flesh-

less lips never relaxed into a smile. To Carmina's unutterable embarrassment, he looked at her, when *she* laughed, with steadier attention than ever. Those coldly-inquiring eyes exercised some inscrutable influence over her. Now they made her angry ; and now they frightened her. The silence that had fallen on them again, became an unendurable infliction. She burst into talk ; she was loud and familiar—ashamed of her own boldness, and quite unable to control it. ‘ You are very fond of Zo ! ’ she said suddenly.

It was a perfectly commonplace remark—and yet, it seemed to perplex him.

‘ Am I ? ’ he answered.

She went on. Against her own will, she persisted in speaking to him. ‘ And I'm sure Zo is fond of you.’

He looked at Zo. ‘ Are you fond of me ? ’ he asked.

Zo, staring hard at him, got off his knee ;

retired to a little distance to think ; and stood staring at him again.

He quietly repeated the question. Zo answered this time—as she had formerly answered Teresa in the Gardens. ‘I don’t know.’

He turned again to Carmina, in a slow, puzzled way. ‘I don’t know either,’ he said.

Hearing the big man own that he was no wiser than herself, Zo returned to him—without, however, getting on his knee again. She clasped her chubby hands under the inspiration of a new idea. ‘Let’s play at something,’ she said to Benjulia. ‘Do you know any games?’

He shook his head.

‘Didn’t you know any games, when you were only as big as me?’

‘I have forgotten them.’

‘Haven’t you got children?’

‘No.’

‘ Haven’t you got a wife ? ’

‘ No.’

‘ Haven’t you got a friend ? ’

‘ No.’

‘ Well, you *are* a miserable chap ! ’

Thanks to Zo, Carmina’s sense of nervous oppression burst its way into relief. She laughed loudly and wildly—she was on the verge of hysterics, when Benjulia’s eyes, silently questioning her again, controlled her at the critical moment. Her laughter died away. But the exciting influence still possessed her ; still forced her into the other alternative of saying something—she neither knew nor cared what.

‘ I couldn’t live such a lonely life as yours,’ she said to him—so loudly and so confidently that even Zo noticed it.

‘ I couldn’t live such a life either,’ he admitted, ‘ but for one thing.’

‘ And what is that ? ’

‘Why are you so loud?’ Zo interposed.
‘Do you think he’s deaf?’

Benjulia made a sign, commanding the child to be silent—without turning towards her. He answered Carmina as if there had been no interruption.

‘My medical studies,’ he said, ‘reconcile me to my life.’

‘Suppose you got tired of your studies?’ she asked.

‘I should never get tired of them.’

‘Suppose you couldn’t study any more?’

‘In that case I shouldn’t live any more.’

‘Do you mean that it would kill you to leave off?’

‘No.’

‘Then what do you mean?’

He laid his great soft fingers on her pulse. She shrank from his touch; he deliberately held her by the arm. ‘You’re getting excited’ he said. ‘Never mind what I mean.’

Zo, left unnoticed and not liking it, saw a chance of asserting herself. 'I know why Carmina's excited,' she said. 'The old woman's coming at six o'clock.'

He paid no attention to the child ; he persisted in keeping watch on Carmina. 'Who is the woman?' he asked.

'The most lovable woman in the world,' she cried ; 'my dear old nurse !' She started up from the sofa, and pointed with theatrical exaggeration of gesture to the clock on the mantelpiece. 'Look ! it's only ten minutes to six. In ten minutes, I shall have my arms round Teresa's neck. Don't look at me in that way ! It's your fault if I'm excited. It's your dreadful eyes that do it. Come here, Zo ! I want to give you a kiss.' She seized on Zo with a roughness that startled the child, and looked wildly at Benjulia. 'Ha ! you don't understand loving and kissing, do you ? What's the use of speaking to *you* about my old nurse ?'

He pointed imperatively to the sofa. ‘Sit down again.’

She obeyed him—but he had not quite composed her yet. Her eyes sparkled; she went on talking. ‘Ah, you’re a hard man! a miserable man! a man that will end badly! You never loved anybody. You don’t know what love is.’

‘What is it?’

That icy question cooled her in an instant: her head sank on her bosom: she suddenly became indifferent to persons and things about her. ‘When will Teresa come?’ she whispered to herself. ‘Oh, when will Teresa come!’

Any other man, whether he really felt for her or not, would, as a mere matter of instinct, have said a kind word to her at that moment. Not the vestige of a change appeared in Ben-julia’s impenetrable composure. She might have been a man—or a baby—or the picture of a girl instead of the girl herself, so far as he

was concerned. He quietly returned to his question.

‘Well,’ he resumed—‘and what is love?’

Not a word, not a movement escaped her.

‘I want to know,’ he persisted, waiting for what might happen.

Nothing happened. He was not perplexed by the sudden change. ‘This is the reaction,’ he thought. ‘We shall see what comes of it.’ He looked about him. A bottle of water stood on one of the tables. ‘Likely to be useful,’ he concluded, ‘in case she feels faint.’

Zo had been listening; Zo saw her way to getting noticed again. Not quite sure of herself this time, she appealed to Carmina. ‘Didn’t he say, just now, he wanted to know?’

Carmina neither heard nor heeded her. Zo tried Benjulia next. ‘Shall I tell you what we do in the schoolroom, when we want to know?’ His attention, like Carmina’s attention, seemed to be far away from her. Zo im-

patiently reminded him of her presence—she laid her hand on his knee.

It was only the hand of a child—an idle, quaint, perverse child—but it touched, ignorantly touched, the one tender place in his nature, unprofaned by the infernal cruelties which made his life acceptable to him ; the one tender place, hidden so deep from the man himself, that even his far-reaching intellect groped in vain to find it out. There, nevertheless, was the feeling which drew him to Zo, contending successfully with his medical interest in a case of nervous derangement. That unintelligible sympathy with a child looked dimly out of his eyes, spoke faintly in his voice, when he replied to her. ‘ Well,’ he said, ‘ what do you do in the schoolroom ? ’

‘ We look in the dictionary,’ Zo answered. ‘ Carmina’s got a dictionary. I’ll get it.’

She climbed on a chair, and found the book, and laid it on Benjulia’s lap. ‘ I don’t so

much mind trying to spell a word,' she explained. 'What I hate is being asked what it means. Miss Minerva won't let me off. She says, Look. *I* won't let *you* off. I'm Miss Minerva and you're Zo. Look!'

He humoured her silently and mechanically—just as he had humoured her in the matter of the stick, and in the matter of the tickling. Having opened the dictionary, he looked again at Carmina. She had not moved; she seemed to be weary enough to fall asleep. The reaction—nothing but the reaction. It might last for hours, or it might be at an end in another minute. An interesting temperament, whichever way it ended. He opened the dictionary.

'Love?' he muttered grimly to himself. 'It seems I'm an object of compassion, because I know nothing about love. Well, what does the book say about it?'

He found the word, and ran his finger

down the paragraphs of explanation which followed. 'Seven meanings to Love,' he remarked. 'First: An affection of the mind excited by beauty and worth of any kind, or by the qualities of an object which communicate pleasure. Second: Courtship. Third: Patriotism, as the love of country. Fourth: Benevolence. Fifth: The object beloved. Sixth: A word of endearment. Seventh: Cupid, the god of love.'

He paused, and reflected a little. Zo, hearing nothing to amuse her, strayed away to the window, and looked out. He glanced at Carmina.

'Which of those meanings makes the pleasure of her life?' he wondered. 'Which of them might have made the pleasure of mine?' He closed the dictionary in contempt. 'The very man whose business is to explain it, tries seven different ways, and doesn't explain it after all. And yet, there is such a thing.'

He reached that conclusion unwillingly and angrily. For the first time, a doubt about himself forced its way into his mind. Might he have looked higher than his torture-table and his knife? Had he gained from his life all that his life might have given to him?

Left by herself, Zo began to grow tired of it. She tried to get Carmina for a companion. 'Come and look out of window,' she said.

Carmina gently refused: she was unwilling to be disturbed. Since she had spoken to Benjulia, her thoughts had been dwelling restfully on Ovid. In another day she might be on her way to him. When would Teresa come?

Benjulia was too preoccupied to notice her. The weak doubt that had got the better of his strong reason, still held him in thrall. 'Love!' he broke out, in the bitterness of his heart. 'It isn't a question of sentiment: it's a question of use. Who is the better for love?'

She heard the last words, and answered

him. 'Everybody is the better for it.' She looked at him with sorrowful eyes, and laid her hand on his arm. 'Everybody,' she added, 'but you.'

He smiled scornfully. 'Everybody is the better for it,' he repeated. 'And who knows what it is?'

She drew away her hand, and looked towards the heavenly tranquillity of the evening sky.

'Who knows what it is?' he reiterated.

'God,' she said.

Benjulia was silent.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE clock on the mantelpiece struck six. Zo, turning suddenly from the window, ran to the sofa. ‘Here’s the carriage!’ she cried.

‘Teresa!’ Carmina exclaimed.

Zo crossed the room, on tiptoe, to the door of the bed-chamber. ‘It’s mamma,’ she said. ‘Don’t tell! I’m going to hide.’

‘Why, dear?’

The answer to this was given mysteriously in a whisper. ‘She said I wasn’t to come to you. She’s a quick one on her legs—she might catch me on the stairs.’ With that explanation, Zo slipped into the bedroom, and held the door ajar.

The minutes passed—and Mrs. Gallilee failed to justify the opinion expressed by her daughter. Not a sound was audible on the stairs. Not a word more was uttered in the room. Benjulia had taken the child's place at the window. He sat there thinking. Carmina had suggested to him some new ideas, relating to the intricate connection between human faith and human happiness. Slowly, slowly, the clock recorded the lapse of the minutes. Carmina's nervous anxiety began to forecast disaster to the absent nurse. She took Teresa's telegram from her pocket, and consulted it again. There was no mistake; six o'clock was the time named for the traveller's arrival—and it was close on ten minutes past the hour. In her ignorance of railway arrangements, she took it for granted that trains were punctual. But her reading had told her that trains were subject to accident. 'I suppose delays occur,' she said to Benjulia, 'without danger to the passengers?'

Before he could answer—Mrs. Gallilee suddenly entered the room.

She had opened the door so softly, that she took them both by surprise. To Carmina's excited imagination, she glided into their presence like a ghost. Her look and manner showed serious agitation, desperately suppressed. In certain places, the paint and powder on her face had cracked, and revealed the furrows and wrinkles beneath. Her hard eyes glittered; her laboured breathing was audible.

Indifferent to all demonstrations of emotion which did not scientifically concern him, Benjulia quietly rose and advanced towards her. She seemed to be unconscious of his presence. He spoke—allowing her to ignore him without troubling himself to notice her temper. ‘When you are able to attend to me, I want to speak to you. Shall I wait downstairs?’ He took his hat and stick—to leave the room; looked at Carmina as he passed her; and at

once went back to his place at the window. Her aunt's silent and sinister entrance had frightened her. Benjulia waited, in the interests of physiology, to see how the new nervous excitement would end.

Thus far, Mrs. Gallilee had kept one of her hands hidden behind her. She advanced close to Carmina, and allowed her hand to be seen. It held an open letter. She shook the letter in her niece's face.

In the position which Mrs. Gallilee now occupied, Carmina was hidden, for the moment, from Benjulia's view. Biding his time at the window, he looked out.

A cab, with luggage on it, had just drawn up at the house.

Was this the old nurse who had been expected to arrive at six o'clock?

The footman came out to open the cab-door. He was followed by Mr. Gallilee, eager to help the person inside to alight. The traveller proved

to be a grey-headed woman, shabbily dressed. Mr. Gallilee cordially shook hands with her—patted her on the shoulder—gave her his arm—led her into the house. The cab with the luggage on it remained at the door. The nurse had evidently not reached the end of her journey yet.

Carmina shrank back on the sofa, when the leaves of the letter touched her face. Mrs. Gallilee's first words were now spoken, in a whisper. The inner fury of her anger, struggling for a vent, began to get the better of her—she gasped for breath and speech.

‘Do you know this letter?’ she said.

Carmina looked at the writing. It was the letter to Ovid, which she had placed in the post-basket that afternoon; the letter which declared that she could no longer endure his mother's cold-blooded cruelty, and that she only waited Teresa's arrival to join him at Quebec.

After one dreadful moment of confusion, her mind realised the outrage implied in the stealing and reading of her letter.

In the earlier time of Carmina's sojourn in the house, Mrs. Gallilee had accused her of deliberate deceit. She had instantly resented the insult by leaving the room. The same spirit in her—the finely-strung spirit that vibrates unfelt in gentle natures, while they live in peace—steadied those quivering nerves, roused that failing courage. She met the furious eyes fixed on her, without shrinking; she spoke gravely and firmly. ‘The letter is mine,’ she said. ‘How did you come by it?’

‘How dare you ask me?’

‘How dare *you* steal my letter?’

Mrs. Gallilee tore open the fastening of her dress at the throat, to get breath. ‘You impudent bastard!’ she burst out, in a frenzy of rage.

Waiting patiently at the window, Benjulia

heard her. 'Hold your damned tongue!' he cried. 'She's your niece.'

Mrs. Gallilee turned on him: her fury broke into a screaming laugh. 'My niece?' she repeated. 'You lie—and you know it! She's the child of an adulteress! She's the child of her mother's lover!'

The door opened as those horrible words passed her lips. The nurse and her husband entered the room.

She was in no position to see them: she was incapable of hearing them. The demon in her urged her on: she attempted to reiterate the detestable falsehood. Her first word died away in silence. The lean brown fingers of the Italian woman had her by the throat—held her as the claws of a tigress might have held her. Her eyes rolled in the mute agony of an appeal for help. In vain! in vain! Not a cry, not a sound, had drawn attention to the attack. Her husband's eyes were fixed, horror-struck,

on the victim of her rage. Benjulia had crossed the room to the sofa, when Carmina heard the words spoken of her mother. From that moment, he was watching the case. Mr. Gallilee alone looked round—when the nurse tightened her hold in a last merciless grasp; dashed the insensible woman on the floor; and, turning back, fell on her knees at her darling's feet.

She looked up in Carmina's face.

A ghastly stare, through half-closed eyes, showed death in life, blankly returning her look. The shock had struck Carmina with a stony calm. She had not started, she had not swooned. Rigid, immovable, there she sat; voiceless and tearless; insensible even to touch; her arms hanging down; her clenched hands resting on either side of her.

Teresa grovelled and groaned at her feet. Those ferocious hands that had laid the slanderer prostrate on the floor, feebly beat her

bosom and her gray head. ‘Oh, Saints beloved of God! Oh, blessed Virgin, mother of Christ, spare my child, my sweet child!’ She rose in wild despair—she seized Benjulia, and madly shook him. ‘Who are you? How dare you touch her? Give her to me, or I’ll be the death of you. Oh, my Carmina, is it sleep that holds you? Wake! wake! wake!’

‘Listen to me,’ said Benjulia, sternly.

She dropped on the sofa by Carmina’s side, and lifted one of the cold clenched hands to her lips. The tears fell slowly over her haggard face. ‘I am very fond of her, sir,’ she said humbly. ‘I’m only an old woman. See what a dreadful welcome my child gives to me. It’s hard on an old woman—hard on an old woman!’

His self-possession was not disturbed—even by this.

‘Do you know what I am?’ he asked. ‘I am a doctor. Leave her to me.’

‘He’s a doctor. That’s good. A doctor’s good. Yes, yes. Does the old man know this doctor—the kind old man?’ She looked vacantly for Mr. Gallilee. He was bending over his wife, sprinkling water on her deathly face.

Teresa got on her feet, and pointed to Mrs. Gallilee. ‘The breath of that She-Devil poisons the air,’ she said. ‘I must take my child out of it. To my place, sir, if you please. Only to my place.’

She attempted to lift Carmina from the sofa—and drew back, breathlessly watching her. Her rigid face faintly relaxed; her eyelids closed, and quivered.

Mr. Gallilee looked up from his wife. ‘Will one of you help me?’ he asked. His tone struck Benjulia. It was the hushed tone of sorrow—no more.

‘I’ll see to it directly.’ With that reply, Benjulia turned to Teresa. ‘Where is your place?’ he said. ‘Far or near?’

‘The message,’ she answered confusedly. ‘The message says.’ She signed to him to look in her hand-bag—dropped on the floor.

He found Carmina’s telegram, containing the address of the lodgings. The house was close by. After some consideration, he sent the nurse into the bedroom, with instructions to bring him the blankets off the bed. In the minute that followed, he examined Mrs. Gallilee. ‘There’s nothing to be frightened about. Let her maid attend to her.’

Mr. Gallilee again surprised Benjulia. He turned from his wife, and looked at Carmina. ‘For God’s sake, don’t leave her here!’ he broke out. ‘After what she has heard, this house is no place for her. Give her to the old nurse!’

Benjulia only answered, as he had answered already—‘I’ll see to it.’ Mr. Gallilee persisted. ‘Is there any risk in moving her?’ he asked.

‘It’s the least of two risks. No more questions! Look to your wife.’

Mr. Gallilee obeyed in silence.

When he lifted his head again, and rose to ring the bell for the maid, the room was silent and lonely. A little pale frightened face peeped out through the bedroom door. Zo ventured in. Her father caught her in his arms, and kissed her as he had never kissed her yet. His eyes were wet with tears. Zo noticed that he never said a word about mamma. The child saw the change in her father, as Benjulia had seen it. She shared one human feeling with her big friend—she, too, was surprised.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE first signs of reviving life had begun to appear, when Marceline answered the bell. In a few minutes more, it was possible to raise Mrs. Gallilee, and to place her on the sofa. Having so far assisted the servant, Mr. Gallilee took Zo by the hand, and drew back. Daunted by the terrible scene which she had witnessed from her hiding-place, the child stood by her father's side in silence. The two waited together, watching Mrs. Gallilee.

She looked wildly round the room. Discovering that she was alone with the members of her family, she became composed: her mind slowly recovered its balance. Her first thought was for herself.

‘Has that woman disfigured me?’ she said to the maid.

Knowing nothing of what had happened, Marceline was at a loss to understand her. ‘Bring me a glass,’ she said. The maid found a hand-glass in the bedroom, and presented it to her. She looked at herself—and drew a long breath of relief. That first anxiety at an end, she spoke to her husband.

‘Where is Carmina?’

‘Out of the house—thank God!’

The answer seemed to bewilder her: she appealed to Marceline.

‘Did he say, thank God?’

‘Yes, ma’am.’

‘Can *you* tell me nothing? Who knows where Carmina has gone?’

‘Joseph knows, ma’am. He heard Dr. Benjulia give the address to the cabman.’ With that answer, she turned anxiously to her master. ‘Is Miss Carmina seriously ill, sir?’

Her mistress spoke again, before Mr. Gallilee could reply. ‘Marceline ! send Joseph up here.’

‘No,’ said Mr. Gallilee.

His wife eyed him with astonishment. ‘Why not?’ she asked.

He said quietly, ‘I forbid it.’

Mrs. Gallilee addressed herself to the maid. ‘Go to my room, and bring me another bonnet and a veil. Stop!’ She tried to rise, and sank back. ‘I must have something to strengthen me. Get the sal volatile.’

Marceline left the room. Mr. Gallilee followed her as far as the door—still leading his little daughter.

‘Go back, my dear, to your sister in the schoolroom,’ he said. ‘I am distressed, Zo ; be a good girl, and you will console me. Say the same to Maria. It will be dull for you, I am afraid. Be patient, my child, and try to bear it for a while.’

‘May I whisper something?’ said Zo.
‘Will Carmina die?’

‘God forbid!’

‘Will they bring her back here?’

In her eagerness, the child spoke above a whisper. Mrs. Gallilee heard the question, and answered it.

‘They will bring Carmina back,’ she said,
‘the moment I can get out.’

Zo looked at her father. ‘Do *you* say that?’ she asked.

He shook his head gravely, and told her again to go to the schoolroom. On the first landing she stopped, and looked back. ‘I’ll be good, papa,’ she said—and went on up the stairs.

Having reached the schoolroom, she became the object of many questions—not one of which she answered. Followed by the dog, she sat down in a corner. ‘What are you thinking about?’ her sister inquired. This

time she was willing to reply. 'I'm thinking about Carmina.'

Mr. Gallilee closed the door when Zo left him. He took a chair, without speaking to his wife or looking at her.

'What are you here for?' she asked.

'I must wait,' he said.

'What for?'

'To see what you do.'

Marceline returned, and administered a dose of sal volatile. Strengthened by the stimulant, Mrs. Gallilee was able to rise. 'My head is giddy,' she said, as she took the maid's arm; 'but I think I can get downstairs with your help.'

Mr. Gallilee silently followed them out.

At the head of the stairs the giddiness increased. Firm as her resolution might be, it gave way before the bodily injury which Mrs. Gallilee had received. Her husband's help was again needed to take her to her bedroom.

She stopped them at the ante-chamber ; still obstinately bent on following her own designs. ‘I shall be better directly,’ she said ; ‘put me on the sofa.’ Marceline relieved her of her bonnet and veil, and asked respectfully if there was any other service required. She looked defiantly at her husband, and reiterated the order—‘Send for Joseph.’ Intelligent resolution is sometimes shaken ; the inert obstinacy of a weak creature, man or animal, is immovable. Mr. Gallilee dismissed the maid with these words : ‘You needn’t wait, my good girl—I’ll speak to Joseph myself, downstairs.’

His wife heard him with amazement and contempt. ‘Are you in your right senses?’ she asked.

He paused on his way out. ‘You were always hard and headstrong,’ he said sadly ; ‘I knew that. A cleverer man than I am might—I suppose it’s possible—a clear-headed

man might have found out how wicked you are.' She lay, thinking; indifferent to anything he could say to her. 'Are you not ashamed?' he asked wonderingly. 'And not even sorry?' She paid no heed to him. He left her.

Descending to the hall, he was met by Joseph. 'Doctor Benjulia has come back, sir. He wishes to see you.'

'Where is he?'

'In the library.'

'Wait, Joseph; I have something to say to you. If your mistress asks where they have taken Miss Carmina, you mustn't—this is my order, Joseph—you mustn't tell her. If you have mentioned it to any of the other servants—it's quite likely they may have asked you, isn't it?' he said, falling into his old habit for a moment. 'If you have mentioned it to the others,' he resumed, '*they* mustn't tell her. That's all, my good man; that's all.'

To his own surprise, Joseph found himself regarding his master with a feeling of respect. Mr. Gallilee entered the library.

‘How is she?’ he asked, eager for news of Carmina.

‘The worse for being moved,’ Benjulia replied. ‘What about your wife?’

Answering that question, Mr. Gallilee mentioned the precautions that he had taken to keep the secret of Teresa’s address.

‘You need be under no anxiety about that,’ said Benjulia. ‘I have left orders that Mrs. Gallilee is not to be admitted. There is a serious necessity for keeping her out. In these cases of partial catalepsy, there is no saying when the change may come. When it does come, I won’t answer for her niece’s reason, if those two see each other again. Send for your own medical man. The girl is his patient, and he is the person on whom the responsibility rests. Let the servant take my

card to him directly. We can meet in consultation at the house.'

He wrote a line on one of his visiting cards. It was at once sent to Mr. Null.

'There's another matter to be settled before I go,' Benjulia proceeded. 'Here are some papers, which I have received from your lawyer, Mr. Mool. They relate to a slander, which your wife unfortunately repeated——'

Mr. Gallilee got up from his chair. 'Don't take my mind back to that—pray don't!' he pleaded earnestly. 'I can't bear it, Doctor Benjulia—I can't bear it! Please to excuse my rudeness: it isn't intentional—I don't know myself what's the matter with me. I've always led a quiet life, sir; I'm not fit for such things as these. Don't suppose I speak selfishly. I'll do what I can, if you will kindly spare me.'

He might as well have appealed to the sympathy of the table at which they were sitting. Benjulia was absolutely incapable of

understanding the state of mind which those words revealed.

‘Can you take these papers to your wife?’ he asked. ‘I called here this evening—being the person to blame—to set the matter right. As it is, I leave her to make the discovery for herself. I desire to hold no more communication with your wife. Have you anything to say to me before I go?’

‘Only one thing. Is there any harm in my calling at the house, to ask how poor Carmina goes on?’

‘Ask as often as you like—provided Mrs. Gallilee doesn’t accompany you. If she’s obstinate, it may not be amiss to give your wife a word of warning. In my opinion, the old nurse is not likely to let her off, next time, with her life. I’ve had a little talk with that curious foreign savage. I said, “You have committed, what we consider in England, a murderous assault. If Mrs. Gallilee doesn’t

mind the public exposure, you may find yourself in a prison." She snapped her fingers in my face. "Suppose I find myself with the hangman's rope round my neck," she said, "what do I care, so long as Carmina is safe from her aunt?" After that pretty answer, she sat down by the girl's bedside, and burst out crying.'

Mr. Gallilee listened absently: his mind still dwelt on Carmina.

'I meant well,' he said, 'when I asked you to take her out of this house. It's no wonder if *I* was wrong. What I am too stupid to understand is—why *you* allowed her to be moved.'

Benjulia listened with a grim smile; Mr. Gallilee's presumption amused him.

'I wonder whether there was any room left for memory, when nature furnished your narrow little head,' he answered pleasantly. 'Didn't I say that moving her was the least of two risks? And haven't I just warned you of

what might have happened, if we had left your wife and her niece together in the same house? When I do a thing at my time of life, Mr. Gallilee—don't think me conceited—I know why I do it.'

While he was speaking of himself in these terms, he might have said something more. He might have added, that his dread of the loss of Carmina's reason really meant his dread of a commonplace termination to an exceptionally interesting case. He might also have acknowledged, that he was not yielding obedience to the rules of professional etiquette, in confiding the patient to her regular medical attendant, but following the selfish suggestions of his own critical judgment.

His experience, brief as it had been, had satisfied him that stupid Mr. Null's course of action could be trusted to let the instructive progress of the malady proceed. Mr. Null would treat the symptoms in perfect good

faith—without a suspicion of the nervous hysteria which, in such a constitution as Carmina's, threatened to establish itself, in course of time, as the hidden cause. These motives—not only excused, but even ennobled, by their scientific connection with the interests of Medical Research—he might have avowed, under more favourable circumstances. While his grand discovery was still barely within reach, Doctor Benjulia stood committed to a system of diplomatic reserve, which even included simple Mr. Gallilee.

He took his hat and stick, and walked out into the hall. 'Can I be of any further use?' he asked carelessly. 'You will hear about the patient from Mr. Null.'

'You won't desert Carmina?' said Mr. Gallilee. 'You will see her yourself, from time to time—won't you?'

'Don't be afraid; I'll look after her.' He spoke sincerely in saying this. Carmina's case

had already suggested new ideas. Even the civilised savage of modern physiology (where his own interests are concerned) is not absolutely insensible to a feeling of gratitude.

Mr. Gallilee opened the door for him.

‘By the-bye,’ he added, as he stepped out, ‘what’s become of Zo?’

‘She’s upstairs, in the schoolroom.

He made one of his dreary jokes. ‘Tell her, when she wants to be tickled again, to let me know. Good-evening!’

Mr. Gallilee returned to the upper part of the house, with the papers left by Benjulia in his hand. Arriving at the dressing-room door, he hesitated. The papers were enclosed in a sealed envelope, addressed to his wife. Secured in this way from inquisitive eyes, there was no necessity for personally presenting them. He went on to the schoolroom, and beckoned to the parlour-maid to come out, and speak to him.

Having instructed her to deliver the papers—telling her mistress that they had been left at the house by Doctor Benjulia—he dismissed the woman from duty. ‘You needn’t return,’ he said; ‘I’ll look after the children myself.’

Maria was busy with her book; and even idle Zo was employed!

She was writing at her own inky desk; and she looked up in confusion, when her father appeared. Unsuspicious Mr. Gallilee took it for granted that his favourite daughter was employed on a writing lesson—following Maria’s industrious example for once. ‘Good children!’ he said, looking affectionately from one to the other. ‘I won’t disturb you; go on.’ He took a chair, satisfied—comforted, even—to be in the same room with the girls.

If he had placed himself nearer to the desk, he might have seen that Zo had been thinking of Carmina to some purpose.

What could she do to make her friend and playfellow well and happy again? There was the question which Zo asked herself, after having seen Carmina carried insensible out of the room.

Possessed of that wonderful capacity for minute observation of the elder persons about them, which is one among the many baffling mysteries presented by the minds of children, Zo had long since discovered that the member of the household, preferred to all others by Carmina, was the good brother who had gone away and left them. In his absence, she was always talking of him—and Zo had seen her kiss his photograph before she put it back in the case.

Dwelling on these recollections, the child's slowly-working mental process arrived more easily than usual at the right conclusion. The way to make Carmina well and happy again, was to bring Ovid back. One of the two

envelopes which he had directed for her still remained—waiting for the letter which might say to him, ‘Come home!’

Zo determined to write that letter—and to do it at once.

She might have confided this design to her father (the one person besides Carmina who neither scolded her nor laughed at her) if Mr. Gallilee had distinguished himself by his masterful position in the house. But she had seen him, as everybody else had seen him, ‘afraid of mamma.’ The doubt whether he might not ‘tell mamma,’ decided her on keeping her secret. As the event proved, the one person who informed Ovid of the terrible necessity that existed for his return, was the little sister whom it had been his last kind effort to console when he left England.

When Mr. Gallilee entered the room, Zo had just reached the end of her letter. Her system of composition excluded capitals and

stops ; and reduced all the words in the English language, by a simple process of abridgment, to words of one syllable.

‘ dear ov you come back car is ill she wants you be quick be quick don’t say i writ this miss min is gone i hate books i like you zo.’

With the pen still in her hand, the wary writer looked round at her father. She had her directed envelope (sadly crumpled) in her pocket ; but she was afraid to take it out. ‘ Maria,’ she thought, ‘ would know what to do in my place. Horrid Maria ! ’ .

Fortune, using the affairs of the household as an instrument, befriended Zo. In a minute more her opportunity arrived. The parlour-maid unexpectedly returned. She addressed Mr. Gallilee with the air of mystery in which English servants, in possession of a message, especially delight. ‘ If you please, sir, Joseph wishes to speak to you.’

‘Where is he?’

‘Outside, sir.’

‘Tell him to come in.’

Thanks to the etiquette of the servants’ hall—which did not permit Joseph to present himself, voluntarily, in the regions above the drawing-room, without being first represented by an ambassadress—attention was now diverted from the children. Zo folded her letter, enclosed it in the envelope, and hid it in her pocket.

Joseph appeared. ‘I beg your pardon, sir, I don’t quite know whether I ought to disturb my mistress. Mr. Le Frank has called, and asked if he can see her.’

Mr. Gallilee consulted the parlour-maid. ‘Was your mistress asleep when I sent you to her?’

‘No, sir. She told me to bring her a cup of tea.’

On those rare former occasions, when

Mrs. Gallilee had been ill, her attentive husband never left it to the servants to consult her wishes. That time had gone by for ever.

‘Tell your mistress, Joseph, that Mr. Le Frank is here.’

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE slander on which Mrs. Gallilee had reckoned, as a means of separating Ovid and Carmina, was now a slander refuted by unanswerable proof. And the man whose exertions had achieved this result, was her own lawyer—the agent whom she had designed to employ, in asserting that claim of the guardian over the ward which Teresa had defied.

As a necessary consequence, the relations between Mr. Mool and herself were already at an end.

There she lay helpless—her authority set at naught ; her person outraged by a brutal attack—there she lay, urged to action by every

reason that a resolute woman could have for asserting her power, and avenging her wrong—without a creature to take her part, without an accomplice to serve her purpose.

She got on her feet, with the resolution of despair. Her heart sank—the room whirled round her—she dropped back on the sofa. In a recumbent position, the giddiness subsided. She could ring the hand-bell on the table at her side. ‘Send instantly for Mr. Null,’ she said to the maid. ‘If he is out, let the messenger follow him, wherever he may be.’

The messenger came back with a note. Mr. Null would call on Mrs. Gallilee as soon as possible. He was then engaged in attendance on Miss Carmina.

At that discovery, Mrs. Gallilee’s last reserves of independent resolution gave way. The services of her own medical attendant were only at her disposal, when Carmina had done with him ! At the top of his letter the address,

which she had thus far tried vainly to discover, stared her in the face : the house was within five minutes' walk—and she was not even able to cross the room ! For the first time in her life, Mrs. Gallilee's imperious spirit acknowledged defeat. For the first time in her life, she asked herself the despicable question : Who can I find to help me ?

Someone knocked at the door.

‘ Who is it ? ’ she cried.

Joseph's voice answered her. ‘ Mr. Le Frank has called, ma'am—and wishes to know if you can see him. ’

She never stopped to think. She never even sent for the maid to see to her personal appearance. The horror of her own helplessness drove her on. Here was the man, whose timely betrayal of Carmina had stopped her on her way to Ovid, in the nick of time ! Here was the self-devoted instrument, waiting to be employed.

‘I’ll see Mr. Le Frank,’ she said. ‘Show him up.’

The music-master looked round the obscurely lit room, and bowed to the recumbent figure on the sofa.

‘I fear I disturb you, madam, at an inconvenient time.’

‘I am suffering from illness, Mr. Le Frank; but I am able to receive you—as you see.’

She stopped there. Now, when she saw him, and heard him, some perverse hesitation in her began to doubt him. Now, when it was too late, she weakly tried to put herself on her guard. What a decay of energy (she felt it herself) in the ready and resolute woman, equal to any emergency at other times! ‘To what am I to attribute the favour of your visit?’ she resumed.

Even her voice failed her: it faltered in spite of her efforts to steady it. Mr. Le Frank’s

vanity drew its own encouraging conclusion from this one circumstance.

‘I am anxious to know how I stand in your estimation,’ he replied. ‘Early this evening, I left a few lines here, enclosing a letter—with my compliments. Have you received the letter?’

‘Yes.’

‘Have you read it?’

Mrs. Gallilee hesitated. Mr. Le Frank smiled.

‘I won’t trouble you, madam, for any more direct reply,’ he said; ‘I will speak plainly. Be so good as to tell me plainly, on your side, which I am—a man who has disgraced himself by stealing a letter? or a man who has distinguished himself by doing you a service?’

An unpleasant alternative, neatly defined! To disavow Mr. Le Frank or to use Mr. Le Frank—there was the case for Mrs. Gallilee’s consideration. She was incapable of pronounc-

ing judgment ; the mere effort of decision, after what she had suffered, fatigued and irritated her. ‘I can’t deny,’ she said, with weary resignation, ‘that you have done me a service.’

He rose, and made a generous return for the confidence that had been placed in him—he repeated his magnificent bow, and sat down again.

‘Our position towards each other seems too plain to be mistaken,’ he proceeded. ‘Your niece’s letter—perfectly useless for the purpose with which I opened it—offers me a means of being even with Miss Carmina, and a chance of being useful to You. Shall I begin by keeping an eye on the young lady?’

‘Is that said, Mr. Le Frank, out of devotion to me?’

‘My devotion to you might wear out,’ he answered audaciously. ‘You may trust my feeling towards your niece to last—I never

forget an injury. Is it indiscreet to inquire how you mean to keep Miss Carmina from joining her lover in Quebec? Does a guardian's authority extend to locking her up in her room?'

Mrs. Gallilee felt the underlying familiarity in these questions—elaborately concealed as it was under an assumption of respect.

'My niece is no longer in my house,' she answered coldly.

'Gone!' cried Mr. Le Frank.

She corrected the expression. 'Removed,' she said, and dropped the subject there.

Mr. Le Frank took the subject up again. 'Removed, I presume, under the care of her nurse?' he rejoined.

The nurse? What did he know about the nurse? 'May I ask——?' Mrs. Gallilee began.

He smiled indulgently, and stopped her there. 'You are not quite yourself to-night,'

he said. ‘Permit me to remind you that your niece’s letter to Mr. Ovid Vere is explicit, and that I took the liberty of reading it before I left it at your house.’

Mrs. Gallilee listened in silence, conscious that she had committed another error. She had carefully excluded from her confidence a man who was already in possession of her secrets! Mr. Le Frank’s courteous sympathy forbade him to take advantage of the position of superiority which he now held.

‘I will do myself the honour of calling again,’ he said, ‘when you are better able to place the right estimate on my humble offers of service. I wouldn’t fatigue you, Mrs. Gallilee, for the world! At the same time, permit me to put one last question which ought not to be delayed. When Miss Carmina left you, did she take away her writing-desk and her keys?’

‘No.’

‘Allow me to suggest that she may send for them at any moment.’

Before it was possible to ask for an explanation, Joseph presented himself again. Mr. Null was waiting downstairs. Mrs. Gallilee arranged that he should be admitted when she rang her bell. Mr. Le Frank approached the sofa, when they were alone, and returned to his suggestion in a whisper.

‘Surely, you see the importance of using your niece’s keys?’ he resumed. ‘We don’t know what correspondence may have been going on, in which the nurse and the governess have been concerned. After we have already intercepted a letter, hesitation is absurd! You are not equal to the effort yourself. I know the room. Don’t be afraid of discovery; I have a naturally soft footfall—and my excuse is ready, if somebody else has a soft footfall too. Leave it to me.’

He lit a candle as he spoke. But for that

allusion to the nurse, Mrs. Gallilee might have ordered him to blow it out again. Eager for any discovery which might, by the barest possibility, place Teresa at her mercy, she silently submitted to Mr. Le Frank. ‘I’ll call to-morrow,’ he said—and slipped out of the room.

When Mr. Null was announced, Mrs. Gallilee pushed up the shade over the globe of the lamp. Her medical attendant’s face might be worth observing, under a clear light.

His timid look, his confused manner, when he made the conventional apologies, told her at once that Teresa had spoken, and that he knew what had happened. Even he had never before been so soothing and so attentive. But he forgot, or he was afraid, to consult appearances by asking what was the matter, before he felt the pulse, and took the temperature, and wrote his prescription. Not a word was uttered by Mrs. Gallilee, until the medical for-

malities came to an end. 'Is there anything more that I can do?' he asked.

'You can tell me,' she said, 'when I shall be well again.'

Mr. Null was polite; Mr. Null was sympathetic. Mrs. Gallilee might be herself again in a day or two—or Mrs. Gallilee might be unhappily confined to her room for some little time. He had hope in his prescription, and hope in perfect quiet and repose—he would suggest the propriety of going to bed at once, and would not fail to call early the next morning.

'Sit down again,' said Mrs. Gallilee.

Mr. Null turned pale. He foresaw what was coming.

'You have been in attendance on Miss Carmina. I wish to know what her illness is.'

Mr. Null began to prevaricate at the outset. 'The case causes us serious anxiety. The

complications are formidable. Doctor Benjulia himself——’

‘In plain words, Mr. Null, can she be moved?’

This produced a definite answer. ‘Quite impossible.’

She only ventured to put her next question after waiting a little to control herself.

‘Is that foreign woman, the nurse—the only nurse—in attendance?’

‘Don’t speak of her, Mrs. Gallilee! A dreadful woman; coarse, furious, a perfect savage. When I suggested a second nurse——’

‘I understand. You asked just now if you could do anything for me. You can do me a great service—you can recommend me a trustworthy lawyer.’

Mr. Null was surprised. As the old medical attendant of the family, he was not unacquainted with the legal adviser. He mentioned Mr. Mool’s name.

‘Mr. Mool has forfeited my confidence,’ Mrs. Gallilee announced. ‘Can you, or can you not, recommend a lawyer?’

‘Oh, certainly! My own lawyer.’

‘You will find writing materials on the table behind me. I won’t keep you more than five minutes. I want you to write from my dictation.’

‘My dear lady, in your present condition——’

‘Do as I tell you! My head is quiet while I lie down. Even a woman in my condition can say what she means to do. I shall not close my eyes to-night, unless I can feel that I have put that wretch in her right place. Who are your lawyers?’

Mr. Null mentioned the names, and took up his pen.

‘Introduce me in the customary form,’ Mrs. Gallilee proceeded; ‘and then refer the lawyers to my brother’s Will. Is it done?’

In due time it was done.

‘Tell them next, how my niece has been taken away from me, and where she has been taken to.’

To the best of his ability, Mr. Null complied.

‘Now,’ said Mrs. Gallilee, ‘write what I mean to do!’

The prospect of being revenged on Teresa revived her. For the moment, at least, she almost looked like herself again.

Mr. Null turned over to a new leaf, with a hand that trembled a little. The dictating voice pronounced these words :

‘I forbid the woman Teresa to act in the capacity of nurse to Miss Carmina, and even to enter the room in which that young lady is now lying ill. I further warn this person, that my niece will be restored to my care, the moment her medical attendants allow her to be removed. And I desire my legal advisers to

assert my authority, as guardian, to-morrow morning.'

Mr. Null finished his task in silent dismay. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

'Is there any very terrible effort required in saying those few words—even to a shattered creature like me?' Mrs. Gallilee asked bitterly. 'Let me hear that the lawyers have got their instructions, when you come to-morrow; and give me the name and address of a nurse whom you can thoroughly recommend. Good-night!'

At last, Mr. Null got away. As he softly closed the dressing-room door, the serious question still dwelt on his mind: What would Teresa do?

CHAPTER XLVIII.

EVEN in the welcome retirement of the school-room, Mr. Gallilee's mind was not at ease. He was troubled by a question entirely new to him—the question of himself, in the character of husband and father.

Accustomed through long years of conjugal association to look up to his wife as a superior creature, he was now conscious that her place in his estimation had been lost, beyond recovery. If he considered next what ought to be done with Maria and Zo, he only renewed his perplexity and distress. To leave them (as he had hitherto left them) absolutely submitted to their mother's authority, was to resign his children to the influence of a woman, who had ceased to be

the object of his confidence and respect. He pondered over it in the schoolroom; he pondered over it when he went to bed. On the next morning, he arrived at a conclusion in the nature of a compromise. He decided on applying to his good friend, Mr. Mool, for a word of advice.

His first proceeding was to call at Teresa's lodgings, in the hope of hearing better news of Carmina.

The melancholy report of her was expressed in two words: No change. He was so distressed that he asked to see the landlady; and tried, in his own helpless kindhearted way, to get a little hopeful information by asking questions—useless questions, repeated over and over again in futile changes of words. The landlady was patient: she respected the undisguised grief of the gentle modest old man; but she held to the hard truth. The one possible

answer was the answer which her servant had already given. When she followed him out, to open the door, Mr. Gallilee requested permission to wait a moment in the hall. ‘If you will allow me, ma’am, I’ll wipe my eyes before I go into the street.’

Arriving at the office without an appointment, he found the lawyer engaged. A clerk presented to him a slip of paper, with a line written by Mr. Mool: ‘Is it anything of importance?’ Simple Mr. Gallilee wrote back: ‘Oh, dear, no; it’s only me! I’ll call again.’ Besides his critical judgment in the matter of champagne, this excellent man possessed another accomplishment—a beautiful handwriting. Mr. Mool, discovering a crooked line and some ill-formed letters in the reply, drew his own conclusions. He sent word to his old friend to wait.

In ten minutes more they were together, and the lawyer was informed of the events that

had followed the visit of Benjulia to Fairfield Gardens, on the previous day.

For a while, the two men sat silently meditating—daunted by the prospect before them. When the time came for speaking, they exercised an influence over each other, of which both were alike unconscious. Out of their common horror of Mrs. Gallilee's conduct, and their common interest in Carmina, they innocently achieved between them the creation of one resolute man.

‘My dear Gallilee, this is a very serious thing.’

‘My dear Mool, I feel it so—or I shouldn't have disturbed you.’

‘Don't talk of disturbing me! I see so many complications ahead of us, I hardly know where to begin.’

‘Just my case! It's a comfort to me that you feel it as I do.’

Mr. Mool rose and tried walking up and

down his room, as a means of stimulating his ingenuity.

‘There’s this poor young lady,’ he resumed.
‘If she gets better——’

‘Don’t put it in that way!’ Mr. Gallilee interposed. ‘It sounds as if you doubted her ever getting well—you see it yourself in that light, don’t you? Be a little more positive, Mool, in mercy to me.’

‘By all means,’ Mr. Mool agreed. ‘Let us say, *when* she gets better. But the difficulty meets us, all the same. If Mrs. Gallilee claims her right, what are we to do?’

Mr. Gallilee rose in his turn, and took a walk up and down the room. That well-meant experiment only left him feebler than ever.

‘What possessed her brother to make her Carmina’s guardian?’ he asked—with the nearest approach to irritability of which he was capable.

The lawyer was busy with his own thoughts. He only enlightened Mr. Gallilee after the question had been repeated.

‘I had the sincerest regard for Mr. Robert Graywell,’ he said. ‘A better husband and father—and don’t let me forget it, a more charming artist—never lived. But,’ said Mr. Mool, with the air of one strong-minded man appealing to another: ‘weak, sadly weak. If you will allow me to say so, your wife’s self-asserting way—well, it was so unlike her brother’s way, that it had its effect on him! If Lady Northlake had been a little less quiet and retiring, the matter might have ended in a very different manner. As it was (I don’t wish to put the case offensively) Mrs. Gallilee imposed on him—and there she is, in authority, under the Will. Let that be. We must protect this poor girl. We must act!’ cried Mr. Mool with a burst of energy.

‘We must act!’ Mr. Gallilee repeated—

and feebly clenched his fist, and softly struck the table.

‘I think I have an idea,’ the lawyer proceeded; ‘suggested by something said to me by Miss Carmina herself. May I ask if you are in her confidence?’

Mr. Gallilee’s face brightened at this. ‘Certainly,’ he answered. ‘I always kiss her when we say good-night, and kiss her again when we say good-morning.’

This proof of his friend’s claims as Carmina’s chosen adviser, seemed rather to surprise Mr. Mool. ‘Did she ever hint at an idea of hastening her marriage?’ he inquired.

Plainly as the question was put, it thoroughly puzzled Mr. Gallilee. His honest face answered for him—he was *not* in Carmina’s confidence. Mr. Mool returned to his idea.

‘The one thing we can do,’ he said, ‘is to hasten Mr. Ovid’s return. There is the only course to take—as I see it.’

‘Let’s do it at once!’ cried Mr. Gallilee.

‘But tell me,’ Mr. Mool insisted, greedy for encouragement—‘does my suggestion relieve your mind?’

‘It’s the first happy moment I’ve had to-day!’ Mr. Gallilee’s weak voice piped high: he was getting firmer and firmer with every word he uttered.

One of them produced a telegraph-form; the other seized a pen. ‘Shall we send the message in your name?’ Mr. Mool asked.

If Mr. Gallilee had possessed a hundred names he would have sent them (and paid for them) all. ‘John Gallilee, 14 Fairfield Gardens, London, To ——’ There the pen stopped. Ovid was still in the wilds of Canada. The one way of communicating with him was through the medium of the bankers at Quebec, To the bankers, accordingly, the message was sent. ‘Please telegraph Mr. Ovid Vere’s address, the moment you know it.’

When the telegram had been sent to the office, an interval of inaction followed. Mr. Gallilee's fortitude suffered a relapse. 'It's a long time to wait,' he said.

His friend agreed with him. Morally speaking, Mr. Mool's strength lay in points of law. No point of law appeared to be involved in the present conference: he shared Mr. Gallilee's depression of spirits. 'We are quite helpless,' he remarked, 'till Mr. Ovid comes back. In the interval, I see no choice for Miss Carmina but to submit to her guardian; unless——' He looked hard at Mr. Gallilee, before he finished his sentence. 'Unless,' he resumed, 'you can get over your present feeling about your wife.'

'Get over it?' Mr. Gallilee repeated.

'It seems quite impossible now, I dare say,' the worthy lawyer admitted. 'A very painful impression has been produced on you. Naturally! naturally! But the force of habit—a

married life of many years—your own kind feeling——’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Mr. Gallilee, bewildered, impatient, almost angry.

‘A little persuasion on your part, my good friend—at the interesting moment of reconciliation—might be followed by excellent results. Mrs. Gallilee might not object to waive her claims, until time has softened existing asperities. Surely, a compromise is possible, if you could only prevail on yourself to forgive your wife.’

‘Forgive her? I should be only too glad to forgive her!’ cried Mr. Gallilee, bursting into violent agitation. ‘How am I to do it? Good God! Mool, how am I to do it? *You* didn’t hear those infamous words. *You* didn’t see that dreadful death-struck look of the poor girl. I declare to you I turn cold when I think of my wife! I can’t go to her when I ought to go—I send the servants into her room. My children, too—my dear good children—it’s

enough to break one's heart—think of their being brought up by a mother who could say what she said, and do—What will they see, I ask you what will they see, if she gets Carmina back in the house, and treats that sweet young creature as she *will* treat her? There were times last night, when I thought of going away for ever—Lord knows where—and taking the girls with me. What am I talking about? I had something to say, and I don't know what it is; I don't know my own self! There, there; I'll keep quiet. It's my poor stupid head, I suppose—hot, Mool, burning hot. Let's be reasonable. Yes, yes, yes; let's be reasonable. You're a lawyer. I said to myself, when I came here, "I want Mool's advice." Be a dear good fellow—set my mind at ease. Oh, my friend, my old friend, what can I do for my children?'

Amazed and distressed—utterly at a loss how to interfere to any good purpose—Mr.

Mool recovered his presence of mind, the moment Mr. Gallilee appealed to him in his legal capacity. 'Don't distress yourself about your children,' he said kindly. 'Thank God, we stand on firm ground, there.'

'Do you mean it, Mool?'

'I mean it. Where your daughters are concerned, the authority is yours. Be firm, Gallilee! be firm!'

'I will! You set me the example—don't you? *You're* firm—eh?'

'Firm as a rock. I agree with you. For the present at least, the children must be removed.'

'At once, Mool!'

'At once!' the lawyer repeated.

They had wrought each other up to the right pitch of resolution, by this time. They were almost loud enough for the clerks to hear them in the office.

'No matter what my wife may say!' Mr. Gallilee stipulated.

‘No matter what she may say,’ Mr. Mool rejoined, ‘the father is master.’

‘And *you* know the law.’

‘And I know the law. You have only to assert yourself.’

‘And *you* have only to back me.’

‘For your children’s sake, Gallilee!’

‘Under my lawyer’s advice, Mool!’

The one resolute Man was produced at last—without a flaw in him anywhere. They were both exhausted by the effort. Mr. Mool suggested a glass of wine.

Mr. Gallilee ventured on a hint. ‘You don’t happen to have a drop of champagne handy?’ he said.

The lawyer rang for his housekeeper. In five minutes, they were pledging each other in foaming tumblers. In five minutes more, they plunged back into business. The question of the best place to which the children could be removed, was easily settled. Mr. Mool offered

his own house ; acknowledging modestly that it had perhaps one drawback—it was within easy reach of Mrs. Gallilee. The statement of this objection stimulated his friend's memory. Lady Northlake was in Scotland. Lady Northlake had invited Maria and Zo, over and over again, to pass the autumn with their cousins ; but Mrs. Gallilee's jealousy had always contrived to find some plausible reason for refusal. ' Write at once,' Mr. Mool advised. ' You may do it in two lines. Your wife is ill ; Miss Carmina is ill ; you are not able to leave London—and the children are pining for fresh air.' In this sense, Mr. Gallilee wrote. He insisted on having the letter sent to the post immediately. ' I know it's long before post-time,' he explained. ' But I want to compose my mind.'

The lawyer paused, with his glass of wine at his lips. ' I say ! You're not hesitating already ? '

‘No more than *you* are,’ Mr. Gallilee answered.

‘You will really send the girls away?’

‘The girls shall go, on the day when Lady Northlake invites them.’

‘I’ll make a note of that,’ said Mr. Mool.

He made the note; and they rose to say good-bye. Faithful Mr. Gallilee still thought of Carmina. ‘Do consider it again!’ he said at parting. ‘Are you sure the law won’t help her?’

‘I might look at her father’s Will,’ Mr. Mool replied.

Mr. Gallilee saw the hopeful side of this suggestion, in the brightest colours. ‘Why didn’t you think of it before?’ he asked.

Mr. Mool gently remonstrated. ‘Don’t forget how many things I have on my mind,’ he said. ‘It only occurs to me now that the Will may give us a remedy—if there is any

open opposition to the ward's marriage engagement, on the guardian's part.'

There he stopped ; knowing Mrs. Gallilee's methods of opposition too well to reckon hopefully on such a result as this. But he was a merciful man—and he kept his misgivings to himself.

On the way home, Mr. Gallilee encountered his wife's maid. Marceline was dropping a letter into the pillar-post-box at the corner of the Square ; she changed colour, on seeing her master. 'Corresponding with her sweetheart,' Mr. Gallilee concluded.

Entering the house with an unfinished cigar in his mouth, he made straight for the smoking-room—and passed his youngest daughter, below him, waiting out of sight on the kitchen stairs.

'Have you done it ?' Zo whispered, when Marceline returned by the servants' entrance.

'It's safe in the post, dear. Now tell me

what you saw yesterday, when you were hidden in Miss Carmina's bedroom.'

The tone in which she spoke implied a confidential agreement. With honourable promptitude Zo, perched on her friend's knee, exerted her memory, and rewarded Marceline for posting her letter to Ovid.

CHAPTER XLIX.

It was past the middle of the day, before Mr. Le Frank paid his promised visit to Mrs. Gallilee. He entered the room with gloomy looks; and made his polite inquiries, as became a depressed musician, in the minor key.

‘I am sorry, madam, to find you still on the sofa. Is there no improvement in your health?’

‘None whatever.’

‘Does your medical attendant give you any hope?’

‘He does what they all do—he preaches patience. No more of myself! You appear to be in depressed spirits.’

Mr. Le Frank admitted with a sigh that appearances had not misrepresented him. ‘I have been bitterly disappointed,’ he said. ‘My feelings as an artist are wounded to the quick. But why do I trouble you with my poor little personal affairs? I humbly beg your pardon.’

His eyes accompanied this modest apology with a look of uneasy anticipation: he evidently expected to be asked to explain himself. Events had followed her instructions to Mr. Null, which left Mrs. Gallilee in need of employing her music-master’s services. She felt the necessity of exerting herself; and did it—with an effort.

‘You have no reason, I hope, to complain of your pupils?’ she said.

‘At this time of year, madam, I have no pupils. They are all out of town.’

She was too deeply preoccupied by her own affairs to trouble herself any further. The

direct way was the easy way. She said wearily, 'Well, what is it?'

He answered in plain terms, this time.

'A bitter humiliation, Mrs. Gallilee! I have been made to regret that I asked you to honour me by accepting the dedication of my Song. The music-sellers, on whom the sale depends, have not taken a tenth part of the number of copies for which we expected them to subscribe. Has some extraordinary change come over the public taste? My composition has been carefully based on fashionable principles—that is to say, on the principles of the modern German school. As little tune as possible; and that little strictly confined to the accompaniment. And what is the result? Loss confronts me, instead of profit—my agreement makes me liable for half the expenses of publication. And, what is far more serious in my estimation, your honoured name is associated with a failure! Don't notice me

—the artist nature—I shall be better in a minute.’ He took out a profusely-scented handkerchief, and buried his face in it with a groan.

Mrs. Gallilee’s hard common sense understood the heart-broken composer to perfection.

‘Stupid of me not to have offered him money yesterday,’ she thought: ‘this waste of time need never have happened.’ She set her mistake right with admirable brevity and directness. ‘Don’t distress yourself, Mr. Le Frank. Now my name is on it, the Song is mine. If your publisher’s account is not satisfactory—be so good as to send it to *me*.’ Mr. Le Frank dropped his dry handkerchief, and sprang theatrically to his feet. His indulgent patroness refused to hear him: to this admirable woman, the dignity of Art was a sacred thing. ‘Not a word more on that subject,’ she said. ‘Tell me how you prospered last night. Your investigations cannot have been inter-

rupted, or I should have heard of it. Come to the result! Have you found anything of importance in my niece's room?'

Mr. Le Frank had again been baffled, so far as the confirmation of his own suspicions was concerned. But the time was not favourable to a confession of personal disappointment. He understood the situation; and made himself the hero of it, in three words.

'Judge for yourself,' he said—and held out the letter of warning from Father Patrizio.

In silence, Mrs. Gallilee read the words which declared her to be the object of Teresa's inveterate resentment, and which charged Carmina with the serious duty of keeping the peace.

'Does it alarm you?' Mr. Le Frank asked.

'I hardly know what I feel,' she answered.
'Give me time to think.'

Mr. Le Frank went back to his chair. He

had reason to congratulate himself already : he had shifted to other shoulders the pecuniary responsibility involved in the failure of his Song. Observing Mrs. Gallilee, he began to see possibilities of a brighter prospect still. Thus far she had kept him at a certain distance. Was the change of mind coming, which would admit him to the position (with all its solid advantages) of a confidential friend?

She suddenly took up Father Patrizio's letter, and showed it to him.

‘What impression does it produce on you,’ she asked, ‘knowing no more than you know now?’

‘The priest's cautious language, madam, speaks for itself. You have an enemy who will stick at nothing.’

She still hesitated to trust him.

‘You see me here,’ she went on, ‘confined to my room ; likely, perhaps, to be in this helpless condition for some time to come. How

would you protect yourself against that woman, in my place?'

'I should wait.'

'For what purpose?'

'If you will allow me to use the language of the card-table, I should wait till the woman shows her hand.'

'She *has* shown it.'

'May I ask when?'

'This morning.'

Mr. Le Frank said no more. If he was really wanted, Mrs. Gallilee had only to speak. After a last moment of hesitation, the pitiless necessities of her position decided her once more. 'You see me too ill to move,' she said; 'the first thing to do, is to tell you why.'

She related the plain facts; without a word of comment, without a sign of emotion. But her husband's horror of her had left an impression, which neither pride nor contempt had been strong enough to resist. She allowed the

music-master to infer, that contending claims to authority over Carmina had led to a quarrel which provoked the assault. The secret of the words that she had spoken, was the one secret that she kept from Mr. Le Frank.

‘While I was insensible,’ she proceeded, ‘my niece was taken away from me. She has been suffering from nervous illness; she was naturally terrified—and she is now at the nurse’s lodgings, too ill to be moved. There you have the state of affairs, up to last night.’

‘Some people might think,’ Mr. Le Frank remarked, ‘that the easiest way out of it, so far, would be to summon the nurse for the assault.’

‘The easiest way compels me to face a public exposure,’ Mrs. Gallilee answered. ‘In my position that is impossible.’

Mr. Le Frank accepted this view of the case as a matter of course. ‘Under the circumstances,’ he said, ‘it’s not easy to advise

you. How can you make the woman submit to your authority, while you are lying here?’

‘My lawyers have made her submit this morning.’

In the extremity of his surprise, Mr. Le Frank forgot himself. ‘The devil they have!’ he exclaimed.

‘They have forbidden her, in my name,’ Mrs. Gallilee continued, ‘to act as nurse to my niece. They have informed her that Miss Carmina will be restored to my care, the moment she can be moved. And they have sent me her unconditional submission in writing, signed by herself.’

She took it from the desk at her side, and read it to him, in these words :

‘I humbly ask pardon of Mrs. Gallilee for the violent and unlawful acts of which I have been guilty. I acknowledge, and submit to, her authority as guardian of Miss Carmina Graywell. And I appeal to her mercy (which

I own I have not deserved) to spare me the misery of separation from Miss Carmina, on any conditions which it may be her good will and pleasure to impose.'

'Now,' Mrs. Gallilee concluded, 'what do you say?'

Speaking sincerely for once, Mr. Le Frank made a startling reply.

'Submit on your side,' he said. 'Do what she asks of you. And when you are well enough to go to her lodgings, decline with thanks if she offers you anything to eat or drink.'

Mrs. Gallilee raised herself on the sofa. 'Are you insulting me, sir,' she asked, 'by making this serious emergency the subject of a joke?'

'I never was more in earnest, madam, in my life.'

'You think—you really think—that she is capable of trying to poison me?'

‘Most assuredly I do.’

Mrs. Gallilee sank back on the pillow. Mr. Le Frank stated his reasons; checking them off, one by one, on his fingers.

‘Who is she?’ he began. ‘She is an Italian woman of the lower orders. The virtues of the people among whom she has been born and bred, are not generally considered to include respect for the sanctity of human life. What do we know already that she has done? She has alarmed the priest, who keeps her conscience, and knows her well; and she has attacked you with such murderous ferocity that it is a wonder you have escaped with your life. What sort of message have you sent to her, after this experience of her temper? You have told the tigress that you have the power to separate her from her cub, and that you mean to use it. On those plain facts, as they stare us in the face, which is the soundest conclusion? To believe that she really submits—

or to believe that she is only gaining time, and is capable (if she sees no other alternative) of trying to poison you?’

‘What would you advise me to do?’ In those words Mrs. Gallilee—never before reduced to ask advice of anybody—owned that sound reasoning was not thrown away on her.

Mr. Le Frank answered the demand made on him without hesitation.

‘The nurse has not signed that act of submission,’ he said, ‘without having her own private reasons for appearing to give way. Rely on it, she is prepared for you—and there is at least a chance that some proof of it may be found. Have all her movements privately watched—and search the room she lives in, as I searched Miss Carmina’s room last night.’

‘Well?’ said Mrs. Gallilee.

‘Well?’ Mr. Le Frank repeated.

She angrily gave way. ‘Say at once that you are the man to do it for me!’ she answered.

‘And say next—if you can—how it is to be done.’

Mr. Le Frank’s manner softened to an air of gentle gallantry.

‘Pray compose yourself!’ he said. ‘I am so glad to be of service to you, and it is so easily done!’

‘Easily?’

‘Dear madam, quite easily. Isn’t the house a lodging-house; and, at this time of year, have I anything to do?’ He rose, and took his hat. ‘Surely, you see me in my new character now? A single gentleman wants a bedroom. His habits are quiet, and he gives excellent references. The address, Mrs. Gallilee—may I trouble you for the address?’

CHAPTER L.

TOWARDS seven o'clock on the evening of Thursday, Carmina recognised Teresa for the first time.

Her half-closed eyes opened, as if from a long sleep : they rested on the old nurse without any appearance of surprise. 'I am so glad to see you, my dear,' she said faintly. 'Are you very tired after your journey?' None of the inquiries which might have been anticipated followed those first words. Not the slightest allusion to Mrs. Gallilee escaped her ; she expressed no anxiety about Miss Minerva ; no sign of uneasiness at finding herself in a strange room, disturbed her quiet face. Contentedly reposing, she looked at Teresa from time to

time and said, 'You will stay with me, won't you?' Now and then, she confessed that her head felt dull and heavy, and asked Teresa to take her hand. 'I feel as if I was sinking away from you,' she said; 'keep hold of my hand and I shan't be afraid to go to sleep.' The words were hardly spoken, before she sank into slumber. Occasionally, Teresa felt her hand tremble, and kissed it. She seemed to be conscious of the kiss, without waking—she smiled in her sleep.

But, when the first hours of the morning came, this state of passive repose was disturbed. A violent attack of sickness came on. It was repeated again and again. Teresa sent for Mr. Null. He did what he could to relieve the new symptom; and he despatched a messenger to his illustrious colleague.

Benjulia lost no time in answering personally the appeal that had been made to him.

Mr. Null said, 'Serious derangement of the

stomach, sir.' Benjulia agreed with him. Mr. Null showed his prescription. Benjulia sanctioned the prescription. Mr. Null said, 'Is there anything you wish to suggest, sir?' Benjulia had nothing to suggest.

He waited, nevertheless, until Carmina was able to speak to him. Teresa and Mr. Null wondered what he would say to her. He only said, 'Do you remember when you last saw me?' After a little consideration, she answered, 'Yes, Zo was with us; Zo brought in your big stick; and we talked——' She tried to rouse her memory. 'What did we talk about?' she asked. A momentary agitation brought a flush to her face. 'I can't remember it,' she said; 'I can't remember when you went away: does it matter?' Benjulia replied, 'Not the least in the world. Go to sleep.'

But he still remained in the room—watching her as she grew drowsy. 'Great weakness,'

Mr. Null whispered. And Benjulia answered, 'Yes ; I'll call again.'

On his way out, he took Teresa aside.

'No more questions,' he said—'and don't help her memory if she asks you.'

'Will she remember, when she gets better ?' Teresa inquired.

'Impossible to say, yet. Wait and see.'

He left her in a hurry ; his experiments were waiting for him. On the way home, his mind dwelt on Carmina's case. Some hidden process was at work there : give it time—and it would show itself. 'I hope that ass won't want me,' he said, thinking of his medical colleague, 'for at least a week to come.'

The week passed—and the physiologist was not disturbed.

During that interval, Mr. Null succeeded in partially overcoming the attacks of sickness : they were less violent, and they were succeeded by longer intervals of repose. In other respects,

there seemed (as Teresa persisted in thinking) to be some little promise of improvement. A certain mental advance was unquestionably noticeable in Carmina. It first showed itself in an interesting way: she began to speak of Ovid.

Her great anxiety was, that he should know nothing of her illness. She forbade Teresa to write to him; she sent messages to Mr. and Mrs. Gallilee, and even to Mr. Mool, entreating them to preserve silence.

The nurse engaged to deliver the messages—and failed to keep her word. This breach of promise (as events had ordered it) proved to be harmless. Mrs. Gallilee had good reasons for not writing. Her husband and Mr. Mool had decided on sending their telegram to the bankers. As for Teresa herself, she had no desire to communicate with Ovid. His absence remained inexcusable, from her point of view. Well or ill, with or without reason, it was the

nurse's opinion that he ought to have remained at home, in Carmina's interests. No other persons were in the least likely to write to Ovid—nobody thought of Zo as a correspondent—Carmina was pacified.

Once or twice, at this later time, the languid efforts of her memory took a wider range.

She wondered why Mrs. Gallilee never came near her ; owning that her aunt's absence was a relief to her, but not feeling interest enough in the subject to ask for information. She also mentioned Miss Minerva. 'Do you know where she has gone? Don't you think she ought to write to me?' Teresa offered to make inquiries. She turned her head wearily on the pillow, and said, 'Never mind!' On another occasion, she asked for Zo, and said it would be pleasant if Mr. Gallilee would call and bring her with him. But she soon dropped the subject, not to return to it again.

The only remembrance which seemed to dwell on her mind for more than a few minutes, was her remembrance of the last letter which she had written to Ovid.

She pleased herself with imagining his surprise, when he received it ; she grew impatient under her continued illness, because it delayed her in escaping to Canada ; she talked to Teresa of the clever manner in which the flight had been planned—with this strange failure of memory, that she attributed the various arrangements for setting discovery at defiance, not to Miss Minerva, but to the nurse.

Here, for the first time, her mind was approaching dangerous ground. The stealing of the letter, and the events that had followed it, stood next in the order of remembrance—if she was capable of a continued effort. Her weakness saved her. Beyond the writing of the letter, her recollections were unable to advance. Not the faintest allusion to any later circum-

stances escaped her. The poor stricken brain still sought its rest in frequent intervals of sleep. Sometimes, she drifted back into partial unconsciousness; sometimes, the attacks of sickness returned. Mr. Null set an excellent example of patience and resignation. He believed as devoutly as ever in his prescriptions; he placed the greatest reliance on time and care. The derangement of the stomach (as he called it) presented something positive and tangible to treat: he had got over the doubts and anxieties that troubled him, when Carmina was first removed to the lodgings. Looking confidently at the surface—without an idea of what was going on below it—he could tell Teresa, with a safe conscience, that he understood the case. He was always ready to comfort her, when her excitable Italian nature passed from the extreme of hope to the extreme of despair. ‘My good woman, we see our way now: it’s a great point gained, I assure you, to see our way.’

‘What do you mean by seeing your way?’ said the downright nurse. ‘Tell me when Carmina will be well again.’

Mr. Null’s medical knowledge was not yet equal to this demand on it. ‘The progress is slow,’ he admitted, ‘still Miss Carmina is getting on.’

‘Is her aunt getting on?’ Teresa asked abruptly. ‘When is Mistress Gallilee likely to come here?’

‘In a few days——’ Mr. Null was about to add ‘I hope;’ but he thought of what might happen when the two women met. As it was, Teresa’s face showed signs of serious disturbance: her mind was plainly not prepared for this speedy prospect of a visit from Mrs Gallilee. She took a letter out of her pocket.

‘I find a good deal of sly prudence in you,’ she said to Mr. Null. ‘You must have seen something, in your time, of the ways of deceitful Englishwomen. What does that palaver mean

in plain words?' She handed the letter to him.

With some reluctance he read it.

'Mrs. Gallilee declines to contract any engagement with the person formerly employed as nurse, in the household of the late Mr. Robert Graywell. Mrs. Gallilee so far recognises the apology and submission offered to her, as to abstain from taking immediate proceedings. In arriving at this decision, she is also influenced by the necessity of sparing her niece any agitation which might interfere with the medical treatment. When the circumstances appear to require it, she will not hesitate to exert her authority.'

The handwriting told Mr. Null that this manifesto had not been written by Mrs. Gallilee herself. The person who had succeeded him, in the capacity of that lady's amanuensis, had been evidently capable of giving sound advice. Little did he suspect that this mysterious secre-

tary was identical with an enterprising pianist, who had once prevailed on him to take a seat at a concert: price five shillings.

‘Well?’ said Teresa.

Mr. Null hesitated.

The nurse stamped impatiently on the floor. ‘Tell me this! When she does come here, will she part me from Carmina? Is that what she means?’

‘Possibly,’ said prudent Mr. Null.

Teresa pointed to the door. ‘Good-morning! I want nothing more of you. Oh, man, man, leave me by myself!’

The moment she was alone, she fell on her knees. Fiercely whispering, she repeated over and over again the words of The Lord’s Prayer: ‘“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Christ, hear me! Mother of Christ, hear me! Oh, Carmina! Carmina!’

She rose and opened the door which communicated with the bedroom. Trembling

pitiously, she looked for a while at Carmina, peacefully asleep—then turned away to a corner of the room, in which stood an old packing-case, fitted with a lock. She took it up; and, returning with it to the sitting-room, softly closed the bedroom door again.

After some hesitation, she decided to open the case. In the terror and confusion that possessed her, she tried the wrong key. Setting this mistake right, she disclosed—strangely mingled with the lighter articles of her own dress—a heap of papers; some of them letters and bills; some of them faded instructions in writing for the preparation of artists' colours.

She recoiled from the objects which her own act had disclosed. Why had she not taken Father Patrizio's advice? If she had only waited another day; if she had only sorted her husband's papers, before she threw the things that her trunk was too full to hold into that half-empty case, what torment might

have been spared to her ! Her eyes turned mournfully to the bedroom door. ‘Oh, my darling, I was in such a hurry to get to You !’

At last, she controlled herself, and put her hand into the case. Searching it in one corner, she produced a little tin canister. A dirty label was pasted on the canister, bearing this quaint inscription in the Italian language :

‘If there is any of the powder we employ in making some of our prettiest colours, left in here, I request my good wife, or any other trustworthy person in her place, to put a seal on it, and take it directly to the manufactory, with the late foreman’s best respects. It looks like nice sugar. Beware of looks—or you may taste poison.’

On the point of opening the canister she hesitated. Under some strange impulse, she did what a child might have done : she shook it, and listened.

The rustle of the rising and falling powder—renewing her terror—seemed to exercise some irresistible fascination over her. ‘The devil’s dance,’ she said to herself, with a ghastly smile. ‘Softly up—and softly down—and tempting me to take off the cover all the time! Why don’t I get rid of it?’

That question set her thinking of Carmina’s guardian.

If Mr. Null was right, in a day or two Mrs. Gallilee might come to the house. After the lawyers had threatened Teresa with the prospect of separation from Carmina, she had opened the packing-case, for the first time since she had left Rome—intending to sort her husband’s papers as a means of relief from her own thoughts. In this way, she had discovered the canister. The sight of the deadly powder had tempted her. There were the horrid means of setting Mrs. Gallilee’s authority at defiance! Some women in her place, would

use them. Though she was not looking into the canister now, she felt that thought stealing back into her mind. There was but one hope for her : she resolved to get rid of the poison.

How ?

At that period of the year, there was no fire in the grate. Within the limits of the room, the means of certain destruction were slow to present themselves. Her own morbid horror of the canister made her suspicious of the curiosity of other people, who might see it in her hand if she showed herself on the stairs. But she was determined, if she lit a fire for the purpose, to find the way to her end. The firmness of her resolution expressed itself by locking the case again, without restoring the canister to its hiding-place.

Providing herself next with a knife, she sat down in a corner—between the bedroom door on one side, and a cupboard in an angle of the

wall on the other—and began the work of destruction by scraping off the paper label. The fragments might be burnt, and the powder (if she made a vow to the Virgin to do it) might be thrown into the fire next—and then the empty canister would be harmless.

She had made but little progress in the work of scraping, when it occurred to her that the lighting of a fire, on that warm autumn day, might look suspicious if the landlady or Mr. Null happened to come in. It would be safer to wait till night-time, when everybody would be in bed.

Arriving at this conclusion, she mechanically suspended the use of her knife.

In the moment of silence that followed, she heard someone enter the bedroom by the door which opened on the stairs. Immediately afterwards, the person turned the handle of the second door at her side. She had barely time enough to open the cupboard, and

hide the canister in it—when the landlady came in.

Teresa looked at her wildly. The landlady looked at the cupboard: she was proud of her cupboard.

‘Plenty of room there,’ she said boastfully: ‘not another house in the neighbourhood could offer you such accommodation as that! Yes—the lock is out of order; I don’t deny it. The last lodger’s doings! She spoilt my tablecloth, and put the inkstand over it to hide the place. Beast! there’s her character in one word. You didn’t hear me knock at the bedroom door? I am so glad to see her sleeping nicely, poor dear! Her chicken broth is ready when she wakes. I’m late to-day in making my inquiries after our young lady. You see we have been hard at work upstairs, getting the bedroom ready for a new lodger. Such a contrast to the person who has just left. A perfect gentleman, this time—and so kind in

waiting a week till I was able to accommodate him. My ground floor rooms were vacant, as you know—but he said the terms were too high for him. Oh, I didn't forget to mention that we had an invalid in the house! Quiet habits (I said) are indeed an essential qualification of any new inmate, at such a time as this. He understood. "I've been an invalid myself" (he said); "and the very reason I am leaving my present lodgings is that they are not quiet enough." Isn't that just the sort of man we want? And, let me tell you, a handsome man too. With a drawback, I must own, in the shape of a bald head. But such a beard, and such a thrilling voice! Hush! Did I hear her calling?'

At last, the landlady permitted other sounds to be audible, besides the sound of her own voice. It became possible to discover that Carmina was now awake. Teresa hurried into the bedroom.

Left by herself in the sitting-room, the landlady—‘purely out of curiosity,’ as she afterwards said, in conversation with her new lodger—opened the cupboard, and looked in.

The canister stood straight before her, on an upper shelf. Did Miss Carmina’s nurse take snuff? She examined the canister: there was a white powder inside. The mutilated label spoke in an unknown tongue. She wetted her finger and tasted the powder. The result was so disagreeable that she was obliged to use her handkerchief. She put the canister back, and closed the cupboard.

‘Medicine, undoubtedly,’ the landlady said to herself. ‘Why should she hurry to put it away, when I came in?’

CHAPTER LI.

IN eight days from the date of his second interview with Mrs. Gallilee, Mr. Le Frank took possession of his new bedroom.

He had arranged to report his proceedings in writing. In Teresa's state of mind, she would certainly distrust a fellow-lodger, discovered in personal communication with Mrs. Gallilee. Mr. Le Frank employed the first day after his arrival in collecting materials for a report. In the evening, he wrote to Mrs. Gallilee—under cover to a friend, who was instructed to forward the letter.

‘ Private and confidential. Dear Madam,—

I have not wasted my time and my opportunities, as you will presently see.

‘My bedroom is immediately above the floor of the house which is occupied by Miss Carmina and her nurse. Having some little matters of my own to settle, I was late in taking possession of my room. Before the lights on the staircase were put out, I took the liberty of looking down at the next landing.

‘Do you remember, when you were a child learning to write, that one of the lines in your copy-books was, “Virtue is its own reward”? This ridiculous assertion was actually verified in my case! Before I had been five minutes at my post, I saw the nurse open her door. She looked up the staircase (without discovering me, it is needless to say), and she looked down the staircase—and, seeing nobody about, returned to her rooms.

‘Waiting till I heard her lock the door, I stole downstairs, and listened outside.

‘One of my two fellow-lodgers (you know that I don’t believe in Miss Carmina’s illness) was lighting a fire—on such a warm autumn night, that the staircase window was left open ! I am absolutely sure of what I say : I heard the crackle of burning wood—I smelt coal smoke.’

‘The motive of this secret proceeding it seems impossible to guess at. If they were burning documents of a dangerous and compromising kind, a candle would have answered their purpose. If they wanted hot water, surely a tin kettle and a spirit lamp must have been at hand in an invalid’s bedroom ? Perhaps, your superior penetration may be able to read the riddle which baffles my ingenuity.

‘So much for the first night.

‘This afternoon, I had some talk with the landlady. My professional avocations having trained me in the art of making myself agreeable to the sex, I may say without vanity that

I produced a favourable impression. In other words, I contrived to set my fair friend talking freely about the old nurse and the interesting invalid.

‘ Out of the flow of words poured on me, one fact of very serious importance has risen to the surface. There is a suspicious canister in the nurse’s possession. The landlady calls the powder inside, medicine. I say, poison.

‘ Am I rushing at a fanciful conclusion? Please wait a little.

‘ During the week of delay which elapsed, before the lodger in possession vacated my room, you kindly admitted me to an interview. I ventured to put some questions, relating to Teresa’s life in Italy and to the persons with whom she associated. Do you remember telling me, when I asked what you knew of her husband, that he was foreman in a manufactory of artists’ colours? and that you had your information from Miss Carmina her-

self, after she had shown you the telegram announcing his death?

‘A lady, possessed of your scientific knowledge, does not require to be told that poisons are employed in making artists’ colours. Remember what the priest’s letter says of Teresa’s feeling towards you, and then say—Is it so very unlikely that she has brought with her to England one of the poisons used by her husband in his trade? and is it quite unreasonable to suppose (when she looks at her canister) that she may be thinking of you?’

‘I may be right or I may be wrong. Thanks to the dilapidated condition of a lock, I can decide the question, at the first opportunity offered to me by the nurse’s absence from the room.

‘My next report shall tell you that I have contrived to provide myself with a sample of the powder—leaving the canister undisturbed. The sample shall be tested by a chemist. If

he pronounces it to be poison, I have a bold course of action to propose.

‘As soon as you are well enough to go to the house, give the nurse her chance of poisoning you.

‘Dear madam, don’t be alarmed! I will accompany you; and I will answer for the result. We will pay our visit at tea-time. Let her offer you a cup—and let me (under pretence of handing it) get possession of the poisoned drink. Before she can cry Stop!—I shall be on my way to the chemist.

‘The penalty for attempted murder is penal servitude. If you still object to a public exposure, we have the chemist’s report, together with your own evidence, ready for your son on his return. How will he feel about his marriage-engagement, when he finds that Miss Carmina’s dearest friend and companion has tried—*perhaps, with her young lady’s knowledge*—to poison his mother?

‘Before concluding, I may mention that I had a narrow escape, only two hours since, of being seen by Teresa on the stairs.

‘I was of course prepared for this sort of meeting, when I engaged my room ; and I have therefore not been foolish enough to enter the house under an assumed name. On the contrary, I propose (in your interests) to establish a neighbourly acquaintance—with time to help me. But the matter of the poison admits of no delay. My chance of getting at it unobserved may be seriously compromised, if the nurse remembers that she first met with me in your house, and distrusts me accordingly. Your devoted servant, L. F.’

Having completed his letter, he rang for the maid, and gave it to her to post.

On her way downstairs, she was stopped on the next landing by Mr. Null. He too had a letter ready: addressed to Doctor Benjulia.

The fierce old nurse followed him out, and said, ‘Post it instantly!’ The civil maid asked if Miss Carmina was better. ‘Worse!’—was all the rude foreigner said. She looked at poor Mr. Null, as if it was his fault.

Left in the retirement of his room, Mr. Le Frank sat at the writing-table, frowning and biting his nails.

Were these evidences of a troubled mind connected with the infamous proposal which he had addressed to Mrs. Gallilee? Nothing of the sort! Having sent away his letter, he was now at leisure to let his personal anxieties absorb him without restraint. He was thinking of Carmina. The oftener his efforts were baffled, the more resolute he became to discover the secret of her behaviour to him. For the hundredth time he said to himself, ‘Her devilish malice reviles me behind my back, and asks me before my face to shake hands and be friends.’ The more outrageously unreasonable

his suspicions became, under the exasperating influence of suspense, the more inveterately his vindictive nature held to its delusion. After meeting her in the hall at Fairfield Gardens, he really believed Carmina's illness to have been assumed as a means of keeping out of his way. If a friend had said to him, 'But what reason have you to think so?'—he would have smiled compassionately, and have given that friend up for a shallow-minded man.

He stole out again, and listened, undetected, at their door. Carmina was speaking; but the words, in those faint tones, were inaudible. Teresa's stronger voice easily reached his ears. 'My darling, talking is not good for you. I'll light the night-lamp—try to sleep.'

Hearing this, he went back to his bedroom to wait a little. Teresa's vigilance might relax if Carmina fell asleep. She might go downstairs for a gossip with the landlady.

After smoking a cigar, he tried again. The

lights on the staircase were now put out : it was eleven o'clock.

She was not asleep : the nurse was reading to her from some devotional book. He gave it up, for that night. His head ached ; the ferment of his own abominable thoughts had fevered him. A cowardly dread of the slightest signs of illness was one of his special weaknesses. The whole day, to-morrow, was before him. He felt his own pulse ; and determined, in justice to himself, to go to bed.

Ten minutes later, the landlady, on *her* way to bed, ascended the stairs. She too heard the voice, still reading aloud—and tapped softly at the door. Teresa opened it.

‘Is the poor thing not asleep yet?’

‘No.’

‘Has she been disturbed in any way?’

‘Somebody has been walking about, overhead,’ Teresa answered.

‘That’s the new lodger!’ exclaimed the landlady. ‘I’ll speak to Mr. Le Frank.’

On the point of closing the door, and saying good-night, Teresa stopped, and considered for a moment.

‘Is *he* your new lodger?’ she said.

‘Yes. Do you know him?’

‘I saw him when I was last in England.’

‘Well?’

‘Nothing more,’ Teresa answered. ‘Good-night!’

CHAPTER LII.

WATCHING through the night by Carmina's bedside, Teresa found herself thinking of Mr. Le Frank. It was one way of getting through the weary time, to guess at the motive which had led him to become a lodger in the house.

Common probabilities pointed to the inference that he might have reasons for changing his residence, which only concerned himself. But common probabilities—from Teresa's point of view—did not apply to Mr. Le Frank. On meeting him, at the time of her last visit to England, his personal appearance had produced such a disagreeable impression on her, that she had even told Carmina 'the music-master looked like a rogue.' With her former prejudice

against him now revived, and with her serious present reasons for distrusting Mrs. Gallilee, she rejected the idea of his accidental presence under her landlady's roof. To her mind, the business of the new lodger in the house was, in all likelihood, the business of a spy. While Mr. Le Frank was warily laying his plans for the next day, he had himself become an object of suspicion to the very woman whose secrets he was plotting to surprise.

This was the longest and saddest night which the faithful old nurse had passed at her darling's bedside.

For the first time, Carmina was fretful, and hard to please : patient persuasion was needed to induce her to take her medicine. Even when she was thirsty, she had an irritable objection to being disturbed, if the lemonade was offered to her which she had relished at other times. Once or twice, when she drowsily stirred in her bed, she showed symptoms of de-

lusion. The poor girl supposed it was the eve of her wedding-day, and eagerly asked what Teresa had done with her new dress. A little later, when she had perhaps been dreaming, she fancied that her mother was still alive, and repeated the long-forgotten talk of her childhood. ‘What have I said to distress you?’ she asked wonderingly, when she found Teresa crying.

Soon after sunrise, there came a long interval of repose.

At the later time when Benjulia arrived, she was quiet and uncomplaining. The change for the worse which had induced Teresa to insist on sending for him, was perversely absent. Mr. Null expected to be roughly rebuked for having disturbed the great man by a false alarm. He attempted to explain: and Teresa attempted to explain. Benjulia paid not the slightest attention to either of them. He made no angry remarks—and he showed,

in his own impenetrable way, as gratifying an interest in the case as ever.

‘Draw up the blind,’ he said; ‘I want to have a good look at her.’

Mr. Null waited respectfully, and imposed strict silence on Teresa, while the investigation was going on. It lasted so long that he ventured to say, ‘Do you see anything particular, sir?’

Benjulia saw his doubts cleared up: time (as he had anticipated) had brought development with it, and had enabled him to arrive at a conclusion. The shock that had struck Carmina had produced complicated hysterical disturbance, which was now beginning to simulate paralysis. Benjulia’s profound and practised observation detected a trifling inequality in the size of the pupils of the eyes, and a slightly unequal action on either side of the face—delicately presented in the eyelids, the nostrils, and the lips. Here was no common

affection of the brain, which even Mr. Null could understand! Here, at last, was Benjulia's reward for sacrificing the precious hours which might otherwise have been employed in the laboratory! From that day, Carmina was destined to receive unknown honour: she was to take her place, along with the other animals, in his note-book of experiments.

He turned quietly to Mr. Null, and finished the consultation in two words.

‘All right!’

‘Have you nothing to suggest, sir?’ Mr. Null inquired.

‘Go on with the treatment — and draw down the blind, if she complains of the light. Good-day!’

‘Are you sure he's a great doctor?’ said Teresa, when the door had closed on him.

‘The greatest we have!’ cried Mr. Null with enthusiasm.

‘Is he a good man?’

‘Why do you ask?’

‘I want to know if we can trust him to tell us the truth?’

‘Not a doubt of it!’ (Who could doubt it, indeed, after he had approved of Mr. Null’s medical treatment?)

‘There’s one thing you have forgotten,’ Teresa persisted. ‘You haven’t asked him when Carmina can be moved.’

‘My good woman, if I had put such a question, he would have set me down as a fool! Nobody can say when she will be well enough to be moved.’

He took his hat. The nurse followed him out.

‘Are you going to Mrs. Gallilee, sir?’

‘Not to-day.’

‘Is she better?’

‘She is almost well again.’

CHAPTER LIII.

LEFT alone, Teresa went into the sitting-room : she was afraid to show herself at the bedside.

Mr. Null had destroyed the one hope which had supported her thus far—the hope of escaping from England with Carmina, before Mrs. Gallilee could interfere. Looking steadfastly at that inspiring prospect, she had forced herself to sign the humble apology and submission which the lawyers had dictated. What was the prospect now? Heavily had the merciless hand of calamity fallen on that brave old soul—and, at last, it had beaten her down! While she stood at the window, mechanically looking out, the dreary view of the back street trembled and disappeared. Teresa was crying.

Happily for herself, she was unable to control her own weakness; the tears lightened her heavy heart. She waited a little, in the fear that her eyes might betray her, before she returned to Carmina. In that interval, she heard the sound of a closing door, on the floor above.

‘The music-master!’ she said to herself.

In an instant, she was at the sitting-room door, looking through the keyhole. It was the one safe way of watching him—and that was enough for Teresa.

His figure appeared suddenly within her narrow range of view—on the mat outside the door. If her distrust of him was without foundation, he would go on downstairs. No! He stopped on the mat to listen—he stooped—*his* eye would have been at the keyhole in another moment. She seized a chair, and moved it. The sound instantly drove him away. He went on, down the stairs.

Teresa considered with herself what safest means of protection—and, if possible, of punishment as well—lay within her reach. How, and where, could the trap be set that might catch him?

She was still puzzled by that question, when the landlady made her appearance—politely anxious to hear what the doctors thought of their patient. Satisfied so far, the wearisome woman had her apologies to make next, for not having yet cautioned Mr. Le Frank.

‘Thinking over it, since last night,’ she said confidentially, ‘I cannot imagine how you heard him walking about overhead. He has such a soft step that he positively takes me by surprise when he comes into my room. He has gone out for an hour; and I have done him a little favour which I am not in the habit of conferring on ordinary lodgers—I have lent him my umbrella, as it threatens rain. In

his absence, I will ask you to listen while I walk about in his room. One can't be too particular, when rest is of such importance to your young lady—and it has struck me as just possible, that the floor of his room may be in fault. My dear, the boards may creak! I'm a sad fidget, I know; but, if the carpenter can set things right—without any horrid hammering, of course!—the sooner he is sent for, the more relieved I shall feel.'

Through this harangue, the nurse had waited, with a patience far from characteristic of her, for an opportunity of saying a timely word. By some tortuous mental process, that she was quite unable to trace, the landlady's allusion to Mr. Le Frank had suggested the very idea of which, in her undisturbed solitude, she had been vainly in search. Never before, had the mistress of the house appeared to Teresa in such a favourable light.

'You needn't trouble yourself, ma'am,' she

said, as soon as she could make herself heard ; ‘ it *was* the creaking of the boards that told me somebody was moving overhead.’

‘ Then I’m not a fidget after all ? Oh, how you relieve me ! Whatever the servants may have to do, one of them shall be sent instantly to the carpenter. So glad to be of any service to that sweet young creature !’

Teresa consulted her watch before she returned to the bedroom.

The improvement in Carmina still continued : she was able to take some of the light nourishment that was waiting for her. As Benjulia had anticipated, she asked to have the blind lowered a little. Teresa drew it completely over the window : she had her own reasons for tempting Carmina to repose. In half an hour more, the weary girl was sleeping, and the nurse was at liberty to set her trap for Mr. Le Frank.

Her first proceeding was to dip the end of a

quill pen into her bottle of salad oil, and to lubricate the lock and key of the door that gave access to the bedroom from the stairs. Having satisfied herself that the key could now be used without making the slightest sound, she turned to the door of communication with the sitting-room next.

This door was covered with green baize. It had handles but no lock ; and it swung inwards, so as to allow the door of the cupboard (situated in the angle of the sitting-room wall) to open towards the bedroom freely. Teresa oiled the hinges, and the brass bolt and staple which protected the baize door on the side of the bedroom. That done, she looked again at her watch.

Mr. Le Frank's absence was expected to last for an hour. In five minutes more, the hour would expire.

After bolting the door of communication, she paused in the bedroom, and wafted a kiss

to Carmina, still at rest. She then left the room by the door which opened on the stairs, and locked it, taking away the key with her.

Having gone down the first flight of stairs, she stopped and went back. The one unsecured door, was the door which led into the sitting-room from the staircase. She opened it and left it invitingly ajar. 'Now,' she said to herself, 'the trap will catch him !'

The hall clock struck the hour when she entered the landlady's room.

The woman of many words was at once charmed and annoyed. Charmed to hear that the dear invalid was resting, and to receive a visit from the nurse : annoyed by the absence of the carpenter, at work somewhere else for the whole of the day. 'If my dear husband had been alive, we should have been independent of carpenters ; he could turn his hand to anything. Now do sit down—I want you to taste some cherry brandy of my own making.'

As Teresa took a chair, Mr. Le Frank returned. The two secret adversaries met, face to face.

‘Surely I remember this lady?’ he said.

Teresa encountered him, on his own ground. She made her best curtesy, and reminded him of the circumstances under which they had formerly met. The hospitable landlady produced her cherry brandy. ‘We are going to have a nice little chat; do sit down, sir, and join us.’ Mr. Le Frank made his apologies. The umbrella which had been so kindly lent to him, had not protected his shoes; his feet were wet; and he was so sadly liable to take cold that he must beg permission to put on his dry things immediately.

Having bowed himself out, he stopped in the passage, and, standing on tiptoe, peeped through a window in the wall, by which light was conveyed to the landlady’s little room. The two women were comfortably seated to-

gether, with the cherry brandy and a plate of biscuits on a table between them. 'In for a good long gossip,' thought Mr. Le Frank. 'Now is my time!'

Not five minutes more had passed, before Teresa made an excuse for running upstairs again. She had forgotten to leave the bell rope, in case Carmina woke, within reach of her hand. The excellent heart of the hostess made allowance for natural anxiety. 'Do it, you good soul,' she said; 'and come back directly!' Left by herself, she filled her glass again, and smiled. Sweetness of temper (encouraged by cherry brandy) can even smile at a glass — unless it happens to be empty.

Approaching her own rooms, Teresa waited, and listened, before she showed herself. No sound reached her through the half open sitting-room door. She noiselessly entered the bedroom, and then locked the door again. Once more she listened; and once more there was

nothing to be heard. Had he seen her on the stairs?

As the doubt crossed her mind, she heard the boards creak on the floor above. Mr. Le Frank was in his room.

Did this mean that her well-laid plan had failed? Or did it mean that he was really changing his shoes and stockings? The last inference was the right one.

He had made no mere excuse downstairs. The serious interests that he had at stake, were not important enough to make him forget his precious health. His chest was delicate; a cold might settle on his lungs. The temptation of the half-open door had its due effect on this prudent man; but it failed to make him forget that his feet were wet.

The boards creaked again; the door of his room was softly closed—then there was silence. Teresa only knew when he had entered the sitting-room by hearing him try the bolted

baize door. After that, he must have stepped out again. He next tried the door of the bed-chamber, from the stairs.

There was a quiet interval once more. Teresa noiselessly drew back the bolt; and, opening the baize door by a mere hair's-breadth, admitted sound from the sitting-room. She now heard him turning the key in a cheffonier, which only contained tradesmen's circulars, receipted bills, and a few books.

(Even with the canister in the cupboard, waiting to be opened, his uppermost idea was to discover Carmina's vindictive motive in Carmina's papers!)

The contents of the cheffonier disappointed him—judging by the tone in which he muttered to himself. The next sound startled Teresa; it was a tap against the lintel of the door behind which she was standing. He had thrown open the cupboard.

The rasping of the cover, as he took it off,

told her that he was examining the canister. She had put it back on the shelf, a harmless thing now—the poison and the label having been both destroyed by fire. Nevertheless, his choosing the canister, from dozens of other things scattered invitingly about it, inspired her with a feeling of distrustful surprise. She was no longer content to find out what he was doing by means of her ears. Determined to see him, and to catch him in the fact, she pulled open the baize door—at the moment when he must have discovered that the canister was empty. A faint thump told her he had thrown it on the floor.

The view of the sitting-room was still hidden from her. She had forgotten the cupboard door.

Now that it was wide open, it covered the entrance to the bedroom, and completely screened them one from the other. For the moment she was startled, and hesitated whether

to show herself or not. His voice stopped her.

‘Is there another canister?’ he said to himself. ‘The dirty old savage may have hidden it——’

Teresa heard no more. ‘The dirty old savage’ was an insult not to be endured! She forgot her intention of stealing on him unobserved; she forgot her resolution to do nothing that could awaken Carmina. Her fierce temper urged her into furious action. With both hands outspread, she flew at the cupboard door, and banged it to in an instant.

A shriek of agony rang through the house. The swiftly closing door had caught, and crushed, the fingers of Le Frank’s right hand, at the moment when he was putting it into the cupboard again.

Without stopping to help him, without even looking at him, she ran back to Carmina.

The swinging baize door fell to, and closed

of itself. No second cry was heard. Nothing happened to falsify her desperate assertion that the shriek was the delusion of a vivid dream. She took Carmina in her arms, and patted and fondled her like a child. ‘See, my darling, I’m with you as usual ; and I have heard nothing. Don’t, oh, don’t tremble in that way ! There—I’ll wrap you up in my shawl, and read to you. No ! let’s talk of Ovid.’

Her efforts to compose Carmina were interrupted by a muffled sound of men’s footsteps and women’s voices in the next room.

She hurriedly opened the door, and entreated them to whisper and be quiet. In the instant before she closed it again, she saw and heard. Le Frank lay in a swoon on the floor. The landlady was kneeling by him, looking at his injured hand ; and the lodgers were saying, ‘Send him to the hospital.’

CHAPTER LIV.

ON Monday morning, the strain on Mrs. Gallilee's powers of patient endurance came to an end. With the help of Mr. Null's arm, she was able to get downstairs to the library. On Tuesday, there would be no objection to her going out for a drive. Mr. Null left her, restored to her equable flow of spirits. He had asked if she wished to have somebody to keep her company—and she had answered briskly, 'Not on any account! I prefer being alone.'

On the morning of Saturday, she had received Mr. Le Frank's letter; but she had not then recovered sufficiently to be able to read it through. She could now take it up again, and get to the end.

Other women might have been alarmed by the atrocious wickedness of the conspiracy which the music-master had planned. Mrs. Gallilee was only offended. That he should think her capable—in her social position—of favouring such a plot as he had suggested, was an insult which she was determined neither to forgive nor forget. Fortunately, she had not committed herself in writing; he could produce no proof of the relations that had existed between them. The first and best use to make of her recovery would be to dismiss him—after paying his expenses, privately and prudently, in money instead of by cheque.

In the meantime, the man's insolence had left its revolting impression on her mind. The one way to remove it was to find some agreeable occupation for her thoughts.

Look at your library table, learned lady, and take the appropriate means of relief that it offers. See the lively modern parasites that

infest Science, eager to invite your attention to their little crawling selves. Follow scientific inquiry, rushing into print to proclaim its own importance, and to declare any human being, who ventures to doubt or differ, a fanatic or a fool. Respect the leaders of public opinion, writing notices of professors, who have made discoveries not yet tried by time, not yet universally accepted even by their brethren, in terms which would be exaggerated if they were applied to Newton or to Bacon. Submit to lectures and addresses by dozens which, if they prove nothing else, prove that what was scientific knowledge some years since, is scientific ignorance now—and that what is scientific knowledge now, may be scientific ignorance in some years more. Absorb your mind in controversies and discussions, in which Mr. Always Right and Mr. Never Wrong exhibit the natural tendency of man to believe in himself, in the most rampant stage of development that the

world has yet seen. And when you have done all this, doubt not that you have made a good use of your time. You have discovered what the gentle wisdom of FARADAY saw and deplored, when he warned the science of his day in words which should live for ever : ‘The first and last step in the education of the judgment is—Humility.’

Having agreeably occupied her mind with subjects that were worthy of it, Mrs. Gallilee rose to seek a little physical relief by walking up and down the room.

Passing and repassing the bookcases, she noticed a remote corner devoted to miscellaneous literature. A volume in faded binding of sky-blue, had been placed upside down. She looked at the book before she put it in its right position. The title was ‘Gallery of British Beauty.’ Among the illustrations—long since forgotten—appeared her own portrait, when she was a girl of Carmina’s age.

A faintly contemptuous smile parted her hard lips, provoked by the recollections of her youth.

What a fool she had been, at that early period of her life! In those days, she had trembled with pleasure at the singing of a famous Italian tenor; she had flown into a passion when a new dress proved to be a misfit, on the evening of a ball; she had given money to beggars in the street; she had fallen in love with a poor young man, and had terrified her weak-minded hysterical mother, by threatening to commit suicide when the beloved object was forbidden the house. Comparing the girl of seventeen with the matured and cultivated woman of later years, what a matchless example Mrs. Gallilee presented of the healthy influence of education, directed to scientific pursuits! ‘Ah!’ she thought, as she put the book back in its place, ‘my girls will have reason to thank me when they grow

up ; *they* have had a mother who has done her duty.'

She took a few more turns up and down the room. The sky had cleared again ; a golden gleam of sunlight drew her to the window. The next moment she regretted even this concession to human weakness. A disagreeable association presented itself, and arrested the pleasant flow of her thoughts. Mr. Gallilee appeared on the door-step ; leaving the house on foot, and carrying a large brown-paper parcel under his arm.

With servants at his disposal, why was he carrying the parcel himself ?

The time had been, when Mrs. Gallilee would have tapped at the window, and would have insisted on his instantly returning and answering that question. But his conduct, since the catastrophe in Carmina's room, had produced complete estrangement between the married pair. All his inquiries after his wife's

health had been made by deputy. When he was not in the schoolroom with the children, he was at his club. Until he came to his senses, and made humble apology, no earthly consideration would induce Mrs. Gallilee to take the slightest notice of him.

She returned to her reading.

The footman came in, with two letters—one arriving by post; the other having been dropped into the box by private messenger. Communications of this latter sort proceeded, not unfrequently, from creditors. Mrs. Gallilee opened the stamped letter first.

It contained nothing more important than a few lines from a daily governess, whom she had engaged until a successor to Miss Minerva could be found. In obedience to Mrs. Gallilee's instructions, the governess would begin her attendance at ten o'clock on the next morning.

The second letter was of a very different

kind. It related the disaster which had befallen Mr. Le Frank.

Mr. Null was the writer. As Miss Carmina's medical attendant, it was his duty to inform her guardian that her health had been unfavourably affected by an alarm in the house. Having described the nature of the alarm, he proceeded in these words: 'You will, I fear, lose the services of your present music-master. Inquiries made this morning at the hospital, and reported to me, appear to suggest serious results. The wounded man's constitution is in an unhealthy state; the surgeons are not sure of being able to save two of the fingers. I will do myself the honour of calling to-morrow before you go out for your drive.'

The impression produced by this intelligence on the lady to whom it was addressed, can only be reported in her own words. She—who knew, on the best scientific authority, that the world had created itself—completely

lost her head, and actually said, ‘Thank God!’

For weeks to come—perhaps for months if the surgeons’ forebodings were fulfilled—Mrs. Gallilee had got rid of Mr. Le Frank. In that moment of infinite relief, if her husband had presented himself, it is even possible that he might have been forgiven.

As it was, Mr. Gallilee returned late in the afternoon; entered his own domain of the smoking-room; and left the house again five minutes afterwards. Joseph officiously opened the door for him; and Joseph was surprised, precisely as his mistress had been surprised. Mr. Gallilee had a large brown paper parcel under his arm—the second which he had taken out of the house with his own hands! Moreover, he looked excessively confused when the footman discovered him. That night, he was late in returning from the club. Joseph (now on the watch) observed that he was not steady

on his legs—and drew his own conclusions accordingly.

Punctual to her time, on the next morning, the new governess arrived. Mrs. Gallilee received her, and sent for the children.

The maid in charge of them appeared alone. She had no doubt that the young ladies would be back directly. The master had taken them out for a little walk, before they began their lessons. He had been informed that the lady who had been appointed to teach them would arrive at ten o'clock. And what had he said? He had said, 'Very good.'

The half-hour struck—eleven o'clock struck—and neither the father nor the children returned. Ten minutes later, someone rang the door bell. The door being duly opened, nobody appeared on the house-step. Joseph looked into the letter-box, and found a note addressed to his mistress, in his master's handwriting. He immediately delivered it.

Hitherto, Mrs. Gallilee had only been anxious. Joseph, waiting for events outside the door, heard the bell rung furiously ; and found his mistress (as he forcibly described it) ‘ like a woman gone distracted.’ Not without reason—to do her justice. Mr. Gallilee’s method of relieving his wife’s anxiety was remarkable by its brevity. In one sentence, he assured her that there was no need to feel alarmed. In another, he mentioned that he had taken the girls away with him for change of air. And then he signed his initials—J. G.

Every servant in the house was summoned to the library, when Mrs. Gallilee had in some degree recovered herself.

One after another they were strictly examined ; and one after another they had no evidence to give—excepting the maid who had been present when the master took the young ladies away. The little she had to tell, pointed to the inference that he had not admitted the

girls to his confidence before they left the house. Maria had submitted, without appearing to be particularly pleased at the prospect of so early a walk. Zo (never ready to exert either her intelligence or her legs) had openly declared that she would rather stay at home. To this the master had answered, 'Get your things on directly!'—and had said it so sharply that Miss Zoe stared at him in astonishment. Had they taken anything with them—a travelling bag for instance? They had taken nothing, except Mr. Gallilee's umbrella. Who had seen Mr. Gallilee last, on the previous night? Joseph had seen him last. The lower classes in England have one, and but one, true feeling of sympathy with the higher classes. The man above them appeals to their hearts, and merits their true service, when he is unsteady on his legs. Joseph nobly confined his evidence to what he had observed some hours previously: he mentioned the parcel. Mrs. Gallilee's keen

perception, quickened by her own experience at the window, arrived at the truth. Those two bulky packages must have contained clothes—left, in anticipation of the journey, under the care of an accomplice. It was impossible that Mr. Gallilee could have got at the girls' dresses and linen, and have made the necessary selections from them, without a woman's assistance. The female servants were examined again. Each one of them positively asserted her innocence. Mrs. Gallilee threatened to send for the police. The indignant women all cried in chorus, 'Search our boxes!' Mrs. Gallilee took a wiser course. She sent to the lawyers who had been recommended to her by Mr. Null. The messenger had just been despatched, when Mr. Null himself, in performance of yesterday's engagement, called at the house.

He, too, was agitated. It was impossible that he could have heard what had happened.

Was he the bearer of bad news? Mrs. Gallilee thought of Carmina first, and then of Mr. Le Frank.

‘Prepare for a surprise,’ Mr. Null began, ‘a joyful surprise, Mrs. Gallilee! I have received a telegram from your son.’

He handed it to her as he spoke.

‘September 6th. Arrived at Quebec, and received information of Carmina’s illness. Shall catch the Boston steamer, and sail to-morrow for Liverpool. Break the news gently to C. For God’s sake send telegram to meet me at Queenstown.’

It was then the 7th of September. If all went well, Ovid might be in London in ten days more.

CHAPTER LV.

MRS. GALLILEE read the telegram—paused—and read it again. She let it drop on her lap ; but her eyes still rested mechanically on the slip of paper. When she spoke, her voice startled Mr. Null. Usually loud and hard, her tones were strangely subdued. If his back had been turned towards her, he would hardly have known who was speaking to him.

‘I must ask you to make allowances for me,’ she began abruptly ; ‘I hardly know what to say. This surprise comes at a time when I am badly prepared for it. I am getting well ; but, you see, I am not quite so strong as I was before that woman attacked me. My husband has gone away—I don’t know where—and has

taken my children with him. Read his note : but don't say anything. You must let me be quiet, or I can't think.'

She handed the letter to Mr. Null. He looked at her—read the few words submitted to him—and looked at her again. For once, his stock of conventional phrases failed him. Who could have anticipated such conduct on the part of her husband? Who could have supposed that she herself would have been affected in this way, by the return of her son?

Mrs. Gallilee drew a long heavy breath. 'I have got it now,' she said. 'My son is coming home in a hurry, because of Carmina's illness. Has Carmina written to him?'

Mr. Null was in his element again : this question appealed to his knowledge of his patient. 'Impossible, Mrs. Gallilee—in her present state of health.'

'In her present state of health? I forgot

that. There was something else. Oh, yes! Has Carmina seen the telegram?’

Mr. Null explained. He had just come from Carmina. In his medical capacity, he had thought it judicious to try the moral effect on his patient of a first allusion to the good news. He had only ventured to say that Mr. Ovid’s agents in Canada had heard from him on his travels, and had reason to believe that he would shortly return to Quebec. Upon the whole, the impression produced on the young lady——

It was useless to go on. Mrs. Gallilee was pursuing her own thoughts, without even a pretence of listening to him.

‘I want to know who wrote to my son,’ she persisted. ‘Was it the nurse?’

Mr. Null considered this to be in the last degree unlikely. The nurse’s language showed a hostile feeling towards Mr. Ovid, in consequence of his absence.

Mrs. Gallilee looked once more at the telegram. ‘Why,’ she asked, ‘does Ovid telegraph to You?’

Mr. Null answered with his customary sense of what was due to himself. ‘As the medical attendant of the family, your son naturally supposed, madam, that Miss Carmina was under my care.’

The implied reproof produced no effect. ‘I wonder whether my son was afraid to trust us?’ was all Mrs. Gallilee said. It was the chance guess of a wandering mind—but it had hit the truth. Kept in ignorance of Carmina’s illness by the elder members of the family, at what other conclusion could Ovid arrive, with Zo’s letter before him? After a momentary pause, Mrs. Gallilee went on. ‘I suppose I may keep the telegram?’ she said.

Prudent Mr. Null offered a copy—and made the copy, then and there. The original (he explained) was his authority for acting on Mr.

Ovid's behalf, and he must therefore beg leave to keep it. Mrs. Gallilee permitted him to exchange the two papers. 'Is there anything more?' she asked. 'Your time is valuable of course. Don't let me detain you.'

'May I feel your pulse before I go?'

She held out her arm to him in silence.

The carriage came to the door while he was counting the beat of the pulse. She glanced at the window, and said, 'Send it away.' Mr. Null remonstrated. 'My dear lady, the air will do you good.' She answered obstinately and quietly, 'No'—and once more became absorbed in thought.

It had been her intention to combine her first day of carriage exercise with a visit to Teresa's lodgings, and a personal exertion of her authority. The news of Ovid's impending return made it a matter of serious importance to consider this resolution under a new light. She had now, not only to reckon with Teresa,

but with her son. With this burden on her enfeebled mind—heavily laden by the sense of injury which her husband's flight had aroused—she had not even reserves enough of energy to spare for the trifling effort of dressing to go out. She broke into irritability, for the first time. ‘I am trying to find out who has written to my son. How can I do it when you are worrying me about the carriage? Have you ever held a full glass in your hand, and been afraid of letting it overflow? That's what I'm afraid of—in my mind—I don't mean that my mind is a glass—I mean——’ Her forehead turned red. ‘*Will* you leave me?’ she cried.

He left her instantly.

The change in her manner, the difficulty she found in expressing her thoughts, had even startled stupid Mr. Null. She had herself alluded to results of the murderous attack made on her by Teresa, which had not perhaps hitherto sufficiently impressed him. In the shock inflicted

on the patient's body, had there been involved some subtly-working influence that had disturbed the steady balance of her mind? Pondering uneasily on that question, he spoke to Joseph in the hall.

‘Do you know about your master and the children?’ he said.

‘Yes, sir.’

‘I wish you had told me of it, when you let me in.’

‘Have I done any harm, sir?’

‘I don't know yet. If you want me, I shall be at home to dinner at seven.’

The next visitor was one of the partners in the legal firm, to which Mrs. Gallilee had applied for advice. After what Mr. Null had said, Joseph hesitated to conduct this gentleman into the presence of his mistress. He left the lawyer in the waiting-room, and took his card.

Mrs. Gallilee's attitude had not changed. She sat looking down at the copied telegram

and the letter from her husband, lying together on her lap. Joseph was obliged to speak twice, before he could rouse her.

‘To-morrow,’ was all she said.

‘What time shall I say, ma’am?’

She put her hand to her head—and broke into anger against Joseph. ‘Settle it yourself, you wretch!’ Her head drooped again over the papers. Joseph returned to the lawyer. ‘My mistress is not very well, sir. She will be obliged if you will call to-morrow, at your own time.’

About an hour later, she rang her bell—rang it unintermittingly, until Joseph appeared. ‘I’m famished,’ she said. ‘Something to eat! I never was so hungry in my life. At once—I can’t wait.’

The cook sent up a cold fowl, and a ham. Her eyes devoured the food, while the footman was carving it for her. Her bad temper seemed to have completely disappeared. She said,

‘What a delicious dinner ! Just the very things I like.’ She lifted the first morsel to her mouth—and laid the fork down again with a weary sigh. ‘No : I can’t eat ; what has come to me ?’ With those words, she pushed her chair away from the table, and looked slowly all round her. ‘I want the telegram and the letter.’ Joseph found them. ‘Can you help me ?’ she said. ‘I am trying to find out who wrote to my son. Say yes, or no, at once ; I hate waiting.’

Joseph left her in her old posture, with her head down and the papers on her lap.

The appearance of the uneaten dinner in the kitchen produced a discussion, followed by a quarrel.

Joseph was of opinion that the mistress had got more upon her mind than her mind could well bear. It was useless to send for Mr. Null ; he had already mentioned that he would not be home until seven o’clock. There was no

superior person in the house to consult. It was not for the servants to take responsibility on themselves. ‘Fetch the nearest doctor, and let *him* be answerable, if anything serious happens.’ Such was Joseph’s advice.

The women (angrily remembering that Mrs. Gallilee had spoken of sending for the police) ridiculed the footman’s cautious proposal—with one exception. When the others ironically asked him if he was not accustomed to the mistress’s temper yet, Mrs. Gallilee’s own maid (Marceline) said, ‘What do we know about it? Joseph is the only one of us who has seen her, since the morning.’

This perfectly sensible remark had the effect of a breath of wind on a smouldering fire. The female servants, all equally suspected of having assisted Mr. Gallilee in making up his parcels, were all equally assured that there was a traitress among them—and that Marceline was the woman. Hitherto suppressed, this

feeling now openly found its way to expression. Marceline lost her temper ; and betrayed herself as her master's guilty confederate.

‘I’m a mean mongrel—am I?’ cried the angry maid, repeating the cook’s allusion to her birthplace in the Channel Islands. ‘The mistress shall know, this minute, that I’m the woman who did it!’

‘Why didn’t you say so before?’ the cook retorted.

‘Because I promised my master not to tell on him, till he got to his journey’s end.’

‘Who’ll lay a wager?’ asked the cook. ‘I bet half-a-crown she changes her mind, before she gets to the top of the stairs.’

‘Perhaps she thinks the mistress will forgive her,’ the parlour-maid suggested ironically.

‘Or perhaps,’ the housemaid added, ‘she means to give the mistress notice to leave.’

‘That’s exactly what I’m going to do!’ said Marceline.

The women all declined to believe her. She appealed to Joseph. ‘What did I tell you, when the mistress first sent me out in the carriage with poor Miss Carmina? Didn’t I say that I was no spy, and that I wouldn’t submit to be made one? I would have left the house—I would!—but for Miss Carmina’s kindness. Any other young lady would have made me feel my mean position. *She* treated me like a friend—and I don’t forget it. I’ll go straight from this place, and help to nurse her!’

With that declaration, Marceline left the kitchen.

Arrived at the library door, she paused. Not as the cook had suggested, to ‘change her mind;’ but to consider beforehand how much she should confess to her mistress, and how much she should hold in reserve.

Zo’s narrative of what had happened, on the evening of Teresa’s arrival, had produced its

inevitable effect on the maid's mind. Strengthening, by the sympathy which it excited, her grateful attachment to Carmina, it had necessarily intensified her dislike of Mrs. Gallilee—and Mrs. Gallilee's innocent husband had profited by that circumstance !

Unexpectedly tried by time, Mr. Gallilee's resolution to assert his paternal authority, in spite of his wife, had failed him. The same timidity which invents a lie in a hurry, can construct a stratagem at leisure. Marceline had discovered her master putting a plan of escape, devised by himself, to its first practical trial before the open wardrobe of his daughters—and had asked slyly if she could be of any use. Never remarkable for presence of mind in emergencies, Mr. Gallilee had helplessly admitted to his confidence the last person in the house, whom anyone else (in his position) would have trusted. 'My good soul, I want to take the girls away quietly for change of air—

you have got little secrets of your own, like me, haven't you?—and the fact is, I don't quite know how many petticoats——.' There, he checked himself; conscious, when it was too late, that he was asking his wife's maid to help him in deceiving his wife. The ready Marceline helped him through the difficulty. 'I understand, sir: my mistress's mind is much occupied—and you don't want to trouble her about this little journey.' Mr. Gallilee, at a loss for any other answer, pulled out his purse. Marceline modestly drew back at the sight of it. 'My mistress pays me, sir; I serve *you* for nothing.' In those words, she would have informed any other man of the place which Mrs. Gallilee held in her estimation. Her master simply considered her to be the most disinterested woman he had ever met with. If she lost her situation through helping him, he engaged to pay her wages until she found another place. The maid set his mind at rest on that subject. 'A

woman who understands hairdressing as I do, sir, can refer to other ladies besides Mrs. Gallilee, and can get a place whenever she wants one.'

Having decided on what she should confess, and on what she should conceal, Marceline knocked at the library door. Receiving no answer, she went in.

Mrs. Gallilee was leaning back in her chair: her hands hung down on either side of her; her eyes looked up drowsily at the ceiling. Prepared to see a person with an overburdened mind, the maid (without sympathy, to quicken her perceptions) saw nothing but a person on the point of taking a nap.

'Can I speak a word, ma'am?'

Mrs. Gallilee's eyes remained fixed on the ceiling. 'Is that my maid?' she asked.

'Treated—to all appearance—with marked contempt, Marceline no longer cared to assume

the forms of respect either in language or manner. 'I wish to give you notice to leave,' she said abruptly; 'I find I can't get on with my fellow-servants.'

Mrs. Gallilee slowly raised her head, and looked at her maid—and said nothing.

'And while I'm about it,' the angry woman proceeded, 'I may as well own the truth. You suspect one of us of helping my master to take away the young ladies' things—I mean some few of their things. Well! you needn't blame innocent people. I'm the person.'

Mrs. Gallilee laid her head back again on the chair—and burst out laughing.

For one moment, Marceline looked at her mistress in blank surprise. Then, the terrible truth burst on her. She ran into the hall, and called for Joseph.

He hurried up the stairs. The instant he presented himself at the open door, Mrs. Gallilee rose to her feet. 'My medical attendant,'

she said, with an assumption of dignity ; ‘ I must explain myself.’ She held up one hand, outstretched ; and counted her fingers with the other. ‘ First my husband. Then my son. Now my maid. One, two, three. Mr. Null, do you know the proverb ? “ It’s the last hair that breaks the camel’s back.” ’ She suddenly dropped on her knees. ‘ Will somebody pray for me ? ’ she cried piteously. ‘ I don’t know how to pray for myself. Where is God ? ’

Bareheaded as he was, Joseph ran out. The nearest doctor lived on the opposite side of the Square. He happened to be at home. When he reached the house, the women servants were holding their mistress down by main force.

CHAPTER LVI.

ON the next day, Mr. Mool—returning from a legal consultation to an appointment at his office—found a gentleman, whom he knew by sight, walking up and down before his door; apparently bent on intercepting him. ‘Mr. Null, I believe?’ he said, with his customary politeness.

Mr. Null answered to his name, and asked for a moment of Mr. Mool’s time. Mr. Mool looked grave, and said he was late for an appointment already. Mr. Null admitted that the clerks in the office had told him so, and said at last, what he ought to have said at first: ‘I am Mrs. Gallilee’s medical attendant—there

is serious necessity for communicating with her husband.'

Mr. Mool instantly led the way into the office.

The chief clerk approached his employer, with some severity of manner. 'The parties have been waiting, sir, for more than a quarter of an hour.' Mr. Mool's attention wandered: he was thinking of Mrs. Gallilee. 'Is she dying?' he asked. 'She is out of her mind,' Mr. Null answered. Those words petrified the lawyer: he looked helplessly at the clerk—who, in his turn, looked indignantly at the office clock. Mr. Mool recovered himself. 'Say I am detained by a most distressing circumstance; I will call on the parties later in the day, at their own hour.' Giving those directions to the clerk, he hurried Mr. Null upstairs into a private room. 'Tell me about it; pray tell me about it. Stop! Perhaps, there is not time enough. What can I do?'

Mr. Null put the question, which he ought to have asked when they met at the house door. ‘Can you tell me Mr. Gallilee’s address?’

‘Certainly! Care of the Earl of Northlake——’

‘Will you please write it in my pocket-book? I am so upset by this dreadful affair that I can’t trust my memory.’

Such a confession of helplessness as this, was all that was wanted to rouse Mr. Mool. He rejected the pocket-book, and wrote the address on a telegram. ‘Return directly: your wife is seriously ill.’ In five minutes more, the message was on its way to Scotland; and Mr. Null was at liberty to tell his melancholy story—if he could.

With assistance from Mr. Mool, he got through it. ‘This morning,’ he proceeded, ‘I have had the two best opinions in London. Assuming that there is no hereditary taint, the

doctors think favourably of Mrs. Gallilee's chances of recovery.'

'Is it violent madness?' Mr. Mool asked.

Mr. Null admitted that two nurses were required. 'The doctors don't look on her violence as a discouraging symptom,' he said. 'They are inclined to attribute it to the strength of her constitution. I felt it my duty to place my own knowledge of the case before them. Without mentioning painful family circumstances——'

'I happen to be acquainted with the circumstances,' Mr. Mool interposed. 'Are they in any way connected with this dreadful state of things?'

He put that question eagerly, as if he had some strong personal interest in hearing the reply.

Mr. Null blundered on steadily with his story. 'I thought it right (with all due reserve) to mention that Mrs. Gallilee had

been subjected to—I won't trouble you with medical language—let us say, to a severe shock; involving mental disturbance as well as bodily injury, before her reason gave way.'

'And they considered that to be the cause ——?'

Mr. Null asserted his dignity. 'The doctors agreed with Me, that it had shaken her power of self-control.'

'You relieve me, Mr. Null—you infinitely relieve me! If our way of removing the children had done the mischief, I should never have forgiven myself.'

He blushed, and said no more. Had Mr. Null noticed the slip of the tongue into which his agitation had betrayed him? Mr. Null did certainly look as if he was going to put a question. The lawyer desperately forestalled him.

'May I ask how you came to apply to me

for Mr. Gallilee's address? Did you think of it yourself?'

Mr. Null had never had an idea of his own, from the day of his birth, downward. 'A very intelligent man,' he answered, 'reminded me that you were an old friend of Mr. Gallilee. In short, it was Joseph—the footman at Fairfield Gardens.'

Joseph's good opinion was of no importance to Mr. Mool's professional interests. He could gratify Mr. Null's curiosity without fear of lowering himself in the estimation of a client.

'I had better, perhaps, explain that chance allusion of mine to the children,' he began. 'My good friend, Mr. Gallilee, had his own reasons for removing his daughters from home for a time—reasons, I am bound to add, in which I concur. The children were to be placed under the care of their aunt, Lady Northlake. Unfortunately, her ladyship was away with my lord, cruising in their yacht.

They were not able to receive Maria and Zoe at once. In the interval that elapsed—excuse my entering into particulars—our excellent friend had his own domestic reasons for arranging the—the sort of clandestine departure which did in fact take place. It was perhaps unwise on my part to consent—in short, I permitted some of the necessary clothing to be privately deposited here, and called for on the way to the station. Very unprofessional, I am aware. I did it for the best; and allowed my friendly feeling to mislead me. Can I be of any use? How is poor Miss Carmina? No better? Oh, dear! dear! Mr. Ovid will hear dreadful news, when he comes home. Can't we prepare him for it, in any way?'

Mr. Null announced that a telegram would meet Ovid at Queenstown—with the air of a man who had removed every obstacle that could be suggested to him. The kind-hearted lawyer shook his head.

‘Is there no friend who can meet him there?’ Mr. Mool suggested. ‘I have clients depending on me—cases, in which property is concerned, and reputation is at stake—or I would gladly go myself. You, with your patients, are as little at liberty as I am. Can’t you think of some other friend?’

Mr. Null could think of nobody, and had nothing to propose. Of the three weak men, now brought into association by the influence of domestic calamity, he was the feeblest, beyond all doubt. Mr. Mool had knowledge of law, and could on occasion be incited to energy. Mr. Gallilee had warm affections, which, being stimulated, could at least assert themselves. Mr. Null, professionally and personally, was incapable of stepping beyond his own narrow limits, under any provocation whatever. He submitted to the force of events as a cabbage-leaf submits to the teeth of a rabbit.

After leaving the office, Carmina's medical attendant had his patient to see. Since the unfortunate alarm in the house, he had begun to feel doubtful and anxious about her again.

In the sitting-room, he found Teresa and the landlady in consultation. In her own abrupt way, the nurse made him acquainted with the nature of the conference.

‘We have two worries to bother us,’ she said; ‘and the music-master is the worst of the two. There’s a notion at the hospital (set agoing, I don’t doubt, by the man himself), that I crushed his fingers on purpose. That’s a lie! With the open cupboard door between us, how could I see him, or he see me? When I gave it a push-to, I no more knew where his hand was, than you do. If I meant anything, I meant to slap his face for prying about in my room. We’ve made out a writing between us, to show to the doctors. You shall have a copy, in case you’re asked about it.

Now for the other matter. You keep on telling me I shall fall ill myself, if I don't get a person to help me with Carmina. Make your mind easy—the person has come.'

'Where is she?'

Teresa pointed to the bedroom.

'Recommended by me?' Mr. Null inquired.

'Recommended by herself. And we don't like her. That's the other worry.'

Mr. Null's dignity declined to attach any importance to the 'other worry.' 'No nurse has any business here, without my sanction! I'll send her away directly.'

He pushed open the baize door. A lady was sitting by Carmina's bedside. Even in the dim light, there was no mistaking *that* face. Mr. Null recognised—Miss Minerva.

She rose, and bowed to him. He returned the bow stiffly. Nature's protecting care of fools supplies them with an instinct which

distrusts ability. Mr. Null had never liked Miss Minerva. At the same time, he was a little afraid of her. This was not the sort of nurse who could be ordered to retire at a moment's notice.

‘I have been waiting anxiously to see you,’ she said—and led the way to the farther end of the room. ‘Carmina terrifies me,’ she added in a whisper. ‘I have been here for an hour. When I entered the room her face, poor dear, seemed to come to life again; she was able to express her joy at seeing me. Even the jealous old nurse noticed the change for the better. Why didn’t it last? Look at her—oh, look at her!’

The melancholy relapse that had followed the short interval of excitement was visible to anyone now.

There was the ‘simulated paralysis,’ showing itself plainly in every part of the face. She lay still as death, looking vacantly at the foot

of the bed. Mr. Null was inclined to resent the interference of a meddling woman, in the discharge of his duty. He felt Carmina's pulse, in sulky silence. Her eyes never moved; her hand showed no consciousness of his touch. Teresa opened the door, and looked in—impatiently eager to see the intruding nurse sent away. Miss Minerva invited her to return to her place at the bedside. 'I only ask to occupy it,' she said considerately, 'when you want rest.' Teresa was ready with an ungracious reply, but found no opportunity of putting it into words. Miss Minerva turned quickly to Mr. Null. 'I must ask you to let me say a few words more,' she continued; 'I will wait for you in the next room.'

Her resolute eyes rested on him with a look which said plainly, 'I mean to be heard.' He followed her into the sitting-room, and waited in sullen submission to hear what she had to say.

‘I must not trouble you by entering into my own affairs,’ she began. ‘I will only say that I have obtained an engagement much sooner than I had anticipated, and that the convenience of my employers made it necessary for me to meet them in Paris. I owed Carmina a letter; but I had reasons for not writing until I knew whether she had, or had not, left London. With that object, I called this morning at her aunt’s house. You now see me here—after what I have heard from the servants. I make no comment, and I ask for no explanations. One thing only, I *must* know. Teresa refers me to you. Is Carmina attended by any other medical man?’

Mr. Null answered stiffly, ‘I am in consultation with Doctor Benjulia; and I expect him to-day.’

The reply startled her. ‘Dr. Benjulia?’ she repeated.

‘The greatest man we have!’ Mr. Null asserted in his most positive manner.

She silently determined to wait until Doctor Benjulia arrived.

‘What is the last news of Mr. Ovid?’ she said to him, after an interval of consideration.

He told her the news, in the fewest words possible. Even he observed that it seemed to excite her.

‘Oh, Mr. Null! who is to prepare him for what he will see in that room? Who is to tell him what he must hear of his mother?’

There was a certain familiarity in the language of this appeal, which Mr. Null felt it necessary to discourage. ‘The matter is left in my hands,’ he announced. ‘I shall telegraph to him at Queenstown. When he comes home, he will find my prescriptions on the table. Being a medical man himself, my treatment of the case will tell Mr. Ovid Vere everything.’

The obstinate insensibility of his tone stopped her on the point of saying what Mr. Mool had said already. She, too, felt for Ovid, when she thought of the cruel brevity of a telegram. 'At what date will the vessel reach Queens-town?' she asked.

'By way of making sure,' said Mr. Null, 'I shall telegraph in a week's time.'

She troubled him with no more inquiries. He had purposely remained standing, in the expectation that she would take the hint, and go; and he now walked to the window, and looked out. She remained in her chair, thinking. In a few minutes more, there was a heavy step on the stairs. Benjulia had arrived.

He looked hard at Miss Minerva, in unconcealed surprise at finding her in the house. She rose, and made an effort to propitiate him by shaking hands. 'I am very anxious,' she said gently, 'to hear your opinion.'

'Your hand tells me that,' he answered.

‘It’s a cold hand, on a warm day. You’re an excitable woman.’

He looked at Mr. Null, and led the way into the bedroom.

Left by herself, Miss Minerva discovered writing materials (placed ready for Mr. Null’s next prescription) on a side table. She made use of them at once to write to her employer. ‘A dear friend of mine is seriously ill, and in urgent need of all that my devotion can do for her. If you are willing to release me from my duties for a short time, your sympathy and indulgence will not be thrown away on an ungrateful woman. If you cannot do me this favour, I ask your pardon for putting you to inconvenience, and leave some other person, whose mind is at ease, to occupy the place which I am for the present unfit to fill.’ Having completed her letter in those terms, she waited Benjulia’s return.

There was sadness in her face, but no

agitation, as she looked patiently towards the bedroom door. At last—in her inmost heart, she knew it—the victory over herself was a victory won. Carmina could trust her now; and Ovid himself should see it!

Mr. Null returned to the sitting-room alone. Doctor Benjulia had no time to spare: he had left the bedroom by the other door.

‘I may say (as you seem anxious) that my colleague approves of a proposal, on my part, to slightly modify the last prescription. We recognise the new symptoms, without feeling alarm.’ Having issued this bulletin, Mr. Null sat down to make his feeble treatment of his patient feebler still.

When he looked up again, the room was empty. Had she left the house? No: her travelling hat and her gloves were on the other table. Had she boldly confronted Teresa on her own ground?

He took his modified prescription into the

bedroom. There she was, and there sat the implacable nurse, already persuaded into listening to her! What conceivable subject could there be, which offered two such women neutral ground to meet on? Mr. Null left the house without the faintest suspicion that Carmina might be the subject.

‘May I try to rouse her?’

Teresa answered by silently resigning her place at the bedside. Miss Minerva touched Carmina’s hand, and spoke. ‘Have you heard the good news, dear? Ovid is coming back in little more than a week.’

Carmina looked—reluctantly looked—at her friend, and said, with an effort, ‘I am glad.’

‘You will be better,’ Miss Minerva continued, ‘the moment you see him.’

Her face became faintly animated. ‘I shall be able to say good-bye,’ she answered.

‘Not good-bye, darling. He is returning to you after a long journey.’

‘I am going, Frances, on a longer journey still.’ She closed her eyes, too weary or too indifferent to say more.

Miss Minerva drew back, struggling against the tears that fell fast over her face. The jealous old nurse quietly moved nearer to her, and kissed her hand. ‘I’ve been a brute and a fool,’ said Teresa ; ‘you’re almost as fond of her as I am.’

A week later, Miss Minerva left London, to wait for Ovid at Queenstown.

CHAPTER LVII.

MR. MOOL was in attendance at Fairfield Gardens, when his old friend arrived from Scotland, to tell him what the cautiously expressed message in the telegram really meant.

But one idea seemed to be impressed on Mr. Gallilee's mind—the idea of reconciliation. He insisted on seeing his wife. It was in vain to tell him that she was utterly incapable of reciprocating or even of understanding his wishes. Absolute resistance was the one alternative left—and it was followed by distressing results. The kind-hearted old man burst into a fit of crying, which even shook the resolution of the doctors. One of them went upstairs to

warn the nurses. The other said, 'Let him see her.'

The instant he showed himself in the room, Mrs. Gallilee recognised him with a shriek of fury. The nurses held her back—while Mr. Mool dragged him out again, and shut the door. The object of the doctors had been gained. His own eyes had convinced him of the terrible necessity of placing his wife under restraint. She was removed to a private asylum.

Maria and Zo had been left in Scotland—as perfectly happy as girls could be, in the society of their cousins, and under the affectionate care of their aunt. Mr. Gallilee remained in London; but he was not left alone in the deserted house. The good lawyer had a spare room at his disposal; and Mrs. Mool and her daughters received him with true sympathy. Coming events helped to steady his mind. He was comforted in the anticipation of Ovid's return, and interested in hearing of the generous motive

which had led Miss Minerva to meet his stepson.

‘I never agreed with the others when they used to abuse our governess,’ he said. ‘She might have been quick-tempered, and she might have been ugly—I suppose I saw her in some other light, myself.’ He had truly seen her under another light. In his simple affectionate nature, there had been instinctive recognition of that great heart.

He was allowed to see Carmina, in the hope that pleasant associations connected with him might have a favourable influence. She smiled faintly, and gave him her hand when she saw him at the bedside—but that was all.

Too deeply distressed to ask to see her again, he made his inquiries for the future at the door. Day after day, the answer was always the same.

Before she left London, Miss Minerva had taken it on herself to engage the vacant rooms,

on the ground floor of the lodging-house, for Ovid. She knew his heart, as she knew her own heart. Once under the same roof with Carmina, he would leave it no more—until life gave her back to him, or death took her away. Hearing of what had been done, Mr. Gallile removed to Ovid's rooms the writing-desk and the books, the favourite music and the faded flowers, left by Carmina at Fairfield Gardens. 'Anything that belongs to her,' he thought, 'will surely be welcome to the poor fellow when he comes back.'

On one afternoon—never afterwards to be forgotten—he had only begun to make his daily inquiry, when the door on the ground floor was opened, and Miss Minerva beckoned to him.

Her face daunted Mr. Gallilee: he asked, in a whisper, if Ovid had returned.

She pointed upwards, and answered, 'He is with her now.'

‘How did he bear it?’

‘We don’t know; we were afraid to follow him into the room.’

She turned towards the window as she spoke. Teresa was sitting there—vacantly looking out. Mr. Gallilee spoke to her kindly: she made no answer; she never even moved. ‘Worn out!’ Miss Minerva whispered to him. ‘When she thinks of Carmina now, she thinks without hope.’

He shuddered. The expression of his own fear was in those words—and he shrank from it. Miss Minerva took his hand, and led him to a chair. ‘Ovid will know best,’ she reminded him; ‘let us wait for what Ovid will say.’

‘Did you meet him on board the vessel?’ Mr. Gallilee asked.

‘Yes.’

‘How did he look?’

‘So well and so strong that you would hardly have known him again—till he asked about

Carmina. Then he turned pale. I knew that I must tell him the truth—but I was afraid to take it entirely on myself. Something Mr. Null said to me, before I left London, suggested that I might help Ovid to understand me if I took the prescriptions to Queenstown. I had not noticed that they were signed by Doctor Benjulia, as well as by Mr. Null. Don't ask me what effect the discovery had on him! I bore it at the time—I can't speak of it now.'

'You good creature! you dear good creature! Forgive me if I have distressed you; I didn't mean it.'

'You have not distressed me. Is there anything else I can tell you?'

Mr. Gallilee hesitated. 'There is one thing more,' he said. 'It isn't about Carmina this time——'

He hesitated again. Miss Minerva understood him. 'Yes,' she answered; 'I spoke to Ovid of his mother. In mercy to himself and

to me, he would hear no details. "I know enough," he said, "if I know that she is the person to blame. I was prepared to hear it. My mother's silence could only be accounted for in one way, when I had read Zo's letter."—Don't you know, Mr. Gallilee, that the child wrote to Ovid?'

The surprise and delight of Zo's fond old father, when he heard the story of the letter, forced a smile from Miss Minerva, even at that time of doubt and sorrow. He declared that he would have returned to his daughter by the mail train of that night, but for two considerations. He must see his stepson before he went back to Scotland; and he must search all the toy-shops in London for the most magnificent present that could be offered to a young person of ten years old. 'Tell Ovid, with my love, I'll call again to-morrow,' he said, looking at his watch. 'I have just time to write to Zo by to-day's post.' He went to his club, for the

first time since he had returned to London. Miss Minerva thought of bygone days, and wondered if he would enjoy his champagne.

A little later Mr. Null called—anxious to know if Ovid had arrived.

Other women, in the position of Miss Minerva and Teresa, might have hesitated to keep the patient's room closed to the doctor. These two were resolved. They refused to disturb Ovid, even by sending up a message. Mr. Null took offence. 'Understand, both of you,' he said, 'when I call to-morrow morning, I shall insist on going upstairs—and if I find this incivility repeated, I shall throw up the case.' He left the room, triumphing in his fool's paradise of aggressive self-conceit.

They waited for some time longer—and still no message reached them from upstairs, 'We may be wrong in staying here,' Miss Minerva suggested; 'he may want to be alone when he leaves her—let us go.'

She rose to return to the house of her new employers. They respected her, and felt for her: while Carmina's illness continued, she had the entire disposal of her time. The nurse accompanied her to the door; resigned to take refuge in the landlady's room. 'I'm afraid to be by myself,' Teresa said. 'Even that woman's chatter is better for me than my own thoughts.'

Before parting for the night they waited in the hall, looking towards the stairs, and listening anxiously. Not a sound disturbed the melancholy silence.

CHAPTER LVIII.

AMONG many vain hopes, one hope had been realised : they had met again.

In the darkened room, her weary eyes could hardly have seen the betrayal of what he suffered—even if she had looked up in his face. She was content to rest her head on his breast, and to feel his arm round her. ‘I am glad, dear,’ she said, ‘to have lived long enough for this.’

Those were her first words—after the first kiss. She had trembled and sighed, when he ran to her and bent over her : it was the one expression left of all her joy and all her love. But it passed away as other lesser agitations

had passed away. One last reserve of energy obeyed the gentle persuasion of love. Silent towards all other friends, she was able to speak to Ovid.

‘You used to breathe so lightly,’ she said. ‘How is it that I hear you now. Oh, Ovid, don’t cry! I couldn’t bear that.’

He answered her quietly. ‘Don’t be afraid, darling; I won’t distress you.’

‘And you will let me say, what I want to say?’

‘Oh yes!’

This satisfied her. ‘I may rest a little now,’ she said.

He too was silent; held down by the heavy hand of despair.

The time had been, in the days of his failing health, when the solemn shadows of evening falling over the fields—the soaring song of the lark in the bright heights of the midday sky—the dear lost remembrances that the divine

touch of music finds again—brought tears into his eyes. They were dry eyes now! Those once tremulous nerves had gathered steady strength, on the broad prairies and in the roving life. Could trembling sorrow, seeking its way to the sources of tears, overbear the robust vitality that rioted in his blood, whether she lived or whether she died? In those deep breathings that had alarmed her, she had indeed heard the struggle of grief, vainly urging its way to expression against the masterful health and strength that set moral weakness at defiance. Nature had remade this man—and Nature never pities.

It was an effort to her to collect her thoughts—but she did collect them. She was able to tell him what was in her mind.

‘Do you think, Ovid, your mother will care much what becomes of me, when I die?’

He started at those dreadful words—so softly, so patiently spoken. ‘You will live,’ he

said. 'My Carmina, what am I here for but to bring you back to life?'

She made no attempt to dispute with him. Quietly, persistently, she returned to the thought that was in her.

'Say that I forgive your mother, Ovid—and that I only ask one thing in return. I ask her to leave me to you, when the end has come. My dear, there is a feeling in me that I can't get over. Don't let me be buried in a great place all crowded with the dead! I once saw a picture—it was at home in Italy, I think—an English picture of a quiet little churchyard in the country. The shadows of the trees rested on the lonely graves. And some great poet had written—oh, such beautiful words about it. *The redbreast loves to build and warble there, And little footsteps lightly print the ground.* Promise, Ovid, you will take me to some place, far from crowds and noise—where children may gather the flowers on my grave.'

He promised—and she thanked him, and rested again.

‘There was something else,’ she said, when the interval had passed. ‘My head is so sleepy. I wonder whether I can think of it?’

After a while, she did think of it.

‘I want to make you a little farewell present. Will you undo my gold chain? Don’t cry, Ovid! oh, don’t cry!’

He obeyed her. The gold chain held the two locket—the treasured portraits of her father and her mother. ‘Wear them for my sake,’ she murmured. ‘Lift me up; I want to put them round your neck myself.’ She tried, vainly tried, to clasp the chain. Her head fell back on his breast. ‘Too sleepy,’ she said; ‘always too sleepy now! Say you love me, Ovid.’

He said it.

‘Kiss me, dear.’

He kissed her.

‘Now lay me down on the pillow. I’m not eighteen yet—and I feel as old as eighty! Rest; all I want is rest.’ Looking at him fondly, her eyes closed little by little—then softly opened again. ‘Don’t wait in this dull room, darling; I will send for you, if I wake.’

It was the only wish of hers that he disobeyed. From time to time, his fingers touched her pulse, and felt its feeble beat. From time to time, he stooped and let the faint coming and going of her breath flutter on his cheek. The twilight fell, and darkness began to gather over the room. Still, he kept his place by her, like a man entranced.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE first trivial sound that broke the spell, was the sound of a match struck in the next room.

He rose, and groped his way to the door. Teresa had ventured upstairs, and had kindled a light. Some momentary doubt of him kept the nurse silent when he looked at her. He stammered, and stared about him confusedly, when he spoke.

‘Where—where—?’ He seemed to have lost his hold on his thoughts—he gave it up, and tried again. ‘I want to be alone,’ he said; recovering, for the moment, some power of expressing himself.

Teresa’s first fear of him vanished. She took him by the hand like a child, and led him

downstairs to his rooms. He stood silently watching her, while she lit the candles.

‘When Carmina sleeps now,’ he asked, ‘does it last long?’

‘Often for hours together,’ the nurse answered.

He said no more; he seemed to have forgotten that there was another person in the room.

She found courage in her pity for him. ‘Try to pray,’ she said, and left him.

He fell on his knees; but still the words failed him. He tried to quiet his mind by holy thoughts. No! The dumb agony in him was powerless to find relief. Only the shadows of thoughts crossed his mind; his eyes ached with a burning heat. He began to be afraid of himself. The active habits of the life that he had left, drove him out, with the instincts of an animal, into space and air. Neither knowing nor caring in what direction he turned his steps,

he walked on at the top of his speed. On and on, till the crowded houses began to grow more rare—till there were gaps of open ground, on either side of him—till the moon rose behind a plantation of trees, and bathed in its melancholy light a lonely high road. He followed the road till he was tired of it, and turned aside into a winding lane. The lights and shadows, alternating with each other, soothed and pleased him. He had got the relief in exercise that had been denied him while he was in repose. He could think again ; he could feel the resolution stirring in him to save that dear one, or to die with her. Now at last, he was man enough to face the terrible necessity that confronted him, and fight the battle of Art and Love against Death. He stopped, and looked round ; eager to return, and be ready for her waking. In that solitary place, there was no hope of finding a person to direct him. He turned, to go back to the high road.

At the same moment, he became conscious of the odour of tobacco wafted towards him on the calm night air. Some one was smoking in the lane.

He retraced his steps, until he reached a gate—with a barren field behind it. There was the man, whose tobacco smoke he had smelt, leaning on the gate, with his pipe in his mouth.

The moonlight fell full on Ovid's face, as he approached to ask his way. The man suddenly stood up—stared at him—and said, 'Hullo! is it you or your ghost?'

His face was in shadow, but his voice answered for him. The man was Benjulia.

'Have you come to see me?' he asked.

'No.'

'Won't you shake hands?'

'No.'

'What's wrong?'

Ovid waited to answer until he had steadied his temper.

‘I have seen Carmina,’ he said.

Benjulia went on with his smoking. ‘An interesting case, isn’t it?’ he remarked.

‘You were called into consultation by Mr. Null,’ Ovid continued; ‘and you approved of his ignorant treatment—you, who knew better.’

‘I should think I did!’ Benjulia rejoined.

‘You deliberately encouraged an incompetent man; you let that poor girl go on from bad to worse—for some vile end of your own.’

Benjulia goodnaturedly corrected him. ‘No, no. For an excellent end—for knowledge.’

‘If I fail to remedy the mischief, which is your doing, and yours alone——’

Benjulia took his pipe out of his mouth. ‘How do you mean to cure her?’ he eagerly interposed. ‘Have you got a new idea?’

‘If I fail,’ Ovid repeated, ‘her death lies at your door. You merciless villain—as certainly

as that moon is now shining over us, your life shall answer for hers.'

Astonishment—immeasurable astonishment—sealed Benjulia's lips. He looked down the lane when Ovid left him, completely stupefied. The one imaginable way of accounting for such language as he had heard—spoken by a competent member of his own profession!—presented the old familiar alternative. 'Drunk or mad?' he wondered while he lit his pipe again. Walking back to the house, his old distrust of Ovid troubled him once more. He decided to call at Teresa's lodgings in a day or two, and ascertain from the landlady (and the chemist) how Carmina was being cured.

Returning to the high road, Ovid was passed by a tradesman, driving his cart towards London. The man civilly offered to take him as far as the nearest outlying cabstand.

Neither the landlady nor Teresa had gone

to their beds when he returned. Their account of Carmina, during his absence, contained nothing to alarm him. He bade them good-night—eager to be left alone in his room.

In the house and out of the house, there was now the perfect silence that helps a man to think. His mind was clear; his memory answered, when he called on it to review that part of his own medical practice which might help him, by experience, in his present need. But he shrank—with Carmina's life in his hands—from trusting wholly to himself. A higher authority than his was waiting to be consulted. He took from his portmanteau the manuscript presented to him by the poor wretch, whose last hours he had soothed in the garret at Montreal.

The work opened with a declaration which gave it a special value, in Ovid's estimation.

‘If this imperfect record of experience is ever read by other eyes than mine, I wish to

make one plain statement at the outset. The information which is presented in these pages is wholly derived from the results of bedside practice; pursued under miserable obstacles and interruptions, and spread over a period of many years. Whatever faults and failings I may have been guilty of as a man, I am innocent, in my professional capacity, of ever having perpetrated the useless and detestable cruelties which go by the name of Vivisection. Without entering into any of the disputes on either side, which this practice has provoked, I declare my conviction that no asserted usefulness in the end, can justify deliberate cruelty in the means. The man who seriously maintains that any pursuit in which he can engage is independent of moral restraint, is a man in a state of revolt against God. I refuse to hear him in his own defence, on that ground.'

Ovid turned next to the section of the work which was entitled 'Brain Disease.' The

writer introduced his observations in these prefatory words :

‘ A celebrated physiologist, plainly avowing the ignorance of doctors in the matter of the brain and its diseases, and alluding to appearances presented by post-mortem examination, concludes his confession thus : “ We cannot even be sure whether many of the changes discovered are the cause or the result of the disease, or whether the two are the conjoint results of a common cause.”

‘ So this man writes, after experience in Vivisection.

‘ Let my different experience be heard next. Not knowing into what hands this manuscript may fall, or what unexpected opportunities of usefulness it may encounter after my death, I purposely abstain from using technical language in the statement which I have now to make.

‘ In medical investigations, as in all other

forms of human inquiry, the result in view is not infrequently obtained by indirect and unexpected means. What I have to say here on the subject of brain disease, was first suggested by experience of two cases, which seemed in the last degree unlikely to help me. They were both cases of young women; each one having been hysterically affected by a serious moral shock; terminating, after a longer or shorter interval, in simulated paralysis. One of these cases I treated successfully. While I was still in attendance on the other, (pursuing the same course of treatment which events had already proved to be right), a fatal accident terminated my patient's life, and rendered a post-mortem examination necessary. From those starting points, I arrived—by devious ways which I am now to relate—at deductions and discoveries that threw a new light on the nature and treatment of brain disease.'

Hour by hour, Ovid studied the pages that

followed, until his mind and the mind of the writer were one. He then returned to certain preliminary allusions to the medical treatment of the two girls—inexpressibly precious to him, in Carmina's present interests. The dawn of day found him prepared at all points, and only waiting until the lapse of the next few hours placed the means of action in his hands.

But there was one anxiety still to be relieved, before he lay down to rest.

He took off his shoes, and stole upstairs to Carmina's door. The faithful Teresa was astir, earnestly persuading her to take some nourishment. The little that he could hear of her voice, as she answered, made his heart ache—it was so faint and so low. Still she could speak; and still there was the old saying to remember, which has comforted so many and deceived so many: While there's life, there's hope.

CHAPTER LX.

AFTER a brief interview with his step-son, Mr. Gallilee returned to his daughters in Scotland.

Touched by his fatherly interest in Carmina, Ovid engaged to keep him informed of her progress towards recovery. If the anticipation of saving her proved to be the sad delusion of love and hope, silence would signify what no words could say.

In ten days 'time, there was a happy end to suspense. The slow process of recovery might extend perhaps to the end of the year. But, if no accident happened, Ovid had the best reasons for believing that Carmina's life was safe.

Freed from the terrible anxieties that had

oppressed him, he was able to write again, a few days later, in a cheerful tone, and to occupy his pen at Mr. Gallilee's express request, with such an apparently trifling subject as the conduct of Mr. Null.

‘Your old medical adviser was quite right in informing you that I had relieved him from any further attendance on Carmina. But his lively imagination (or perhaps I ought to say, his sense of his own consequence) has misled you when he also declares that I purposely insulted him. I took the greatest pains not to wound his self-esteem. He left me in anger, nevertheless.

‘A day or two afterwards, I received a note from him; addressing me as “Sir,” and asking ironically if I had any objection to his looking at the copies of my prescriptions in the chemist's book. Though he was old enough to be my father (he remarked) it seemed that

experience counted for nothing; he had still something to learn from his junior, in the treatment of disease—and so on.

‘At that miserable time of doubt and anxiety, I could only send a verbal reply, leaving him to do what he liked. Before I tell you of the use that he made of his liberty of action, I must confess something relating to the prescriptions themselves. Don’t be afraid of long and learned words, and don’t suppose that I am occupying your attention in this way, without a serious reason for it which you will presently understand.

‘A note in the manuscript—to my study of which, I owe, under God, the preservation of Carmina’s life—warned me that chemists, in the writer’s country, had either refused to make up certain prescriptions given in the work, or had taken the liberty of altering the new quantities and combinations of some of the drugs prescribed.

‘Precisely the same thing happened here, in the case of the first chemist to whom I sent. He refused to make up the medicine, unless I provided him with a signed statement taking the whole responsibility on myself.

‘Having ascertained the exact nature of his objection, I dismissed him without his guarantee, and employed another chemist; taking care (in the interests of my time and my temper) to write my more important prescriptions under reserve. That is to say, I followed the conventional rules, as to quantities and combinations, and made the necessary additions or changes from my own private stores when the medicine was sent home.

‘Poor foolish Mr. Null, finding nothing to astonish him in my course of medicine—as represented by the chemist—appears by his own confession, to have copied the prescriptions with a malicious object in view. “I have sent them, (he informs me, in a second letter) to

Doctor Benjulia ; in order that he too may learn something in his profession from the master who has dispensed with our services." This new effort of irony means that I stand self-condemned of vanity, in presuming to rely on my own commonplace resources—represented by the deceitful evidence of the chemist's book !

‘ But I am grateful to Mr. Null, notwithstanding : he has done me a service, in meaning to do me an injury.

‘ My imperfect prescriptions have quieted the mind of the man to whom he sent them. This wretch's distrust has long since falsely suspected me of some professional rivalry pursued in secret ; the feeling showed itself again, when I met with him by accident on the night of my return to London. Since Mr. Null has communicated with him, the landlady is no longer insulted by his visits, and offended by his questions—all relating to the course of treatment which I was pursuing upstairs.

‘ You now understand why I have ventured to trouble you on a purely professional topic. To turn to matters of more interest—our dear Carmina is well enough to remember you, and to send her love to you and the girls. But even this little effort is followed by fatigue.

‘ I don’t mean only fatigue of body; that is now a question of time and care. I mean fatigue of mind—expressing itself by defect of memory.

‘ On the morning when the first positive change for the better appeared, I was at her bedside when she woke. She looked at me in amazement. “ Why didn’t you warn me _of_ your sudden return ? ” she asked, “ I have only written to you to-day—to your bankers at Quebec ! What does it mean ? ”

‘ I did my best to soothe her, and succeeded. There is a complete lapse in her memory—I am only too sure of it ! She has no recollection of anything that has happened, since she

wrote her last letter to me—a letter which must have been lost (perhaps intercepted?), or I should have received it before I left Quebec. This forgetfulness of the dreadful trials through which my poor darling has passed, is, in itself, a circumstance which we must all rejoice over for her sake. But I am discouraged by it, at the same time; fearing it may indicate some more serious injury than I have yet discovered.

‘Miss Minerva—what should I do without the help and sympathy of that best of true women?—Miss Minerva has cautiously tested her memory in other directions, with encouraging results, so far. But I shall not feel easy until I have tried further experiments, by means of some person who does not exercise a powerful influence over her, and whose memory is naturally occupied with what we older people call trifles.

‘When you all leave Scotland next month, bring Zo here with you. My dear little

correspondent is just the sort of quaint child I want for the purpose. Kiss her for me till she is out of breath—and say that is what I mean to do when we meet.’

The return to London took place in the last week in October.

Lord and Lady Northlake went to their town residence, taking Maria and Zo with them. There were associations connected with Fairfield Gardens, which made the prospect of living there—without even the society of his children—unendurable to Mr. Gallilee. Ovid’s house, still waiting the return of its master, was open to his step-father. The poor man was only too glad (in his own simple language) ‘to keep the nest warm for his son.’

The latest inquiries made at the asylum were hopefully answered. Thus far, the measures taken to restore Mrs. Gallilee to herself had succeeded beyond expectation. But

one unfavourable symptom remained. She was habitually silent. When she did speak, her mind seemed to be occupied with scientific subjects: she never mentioned her husband, or any other member of the family. Time and attention would remove this drawback. In two or three months more perhaps, if all went well, she might return to her family and her friends, as sane a woman as ever.

Calling at Fairfield Gardens for any letters that might be waiting there, Mr. Gallilee received a circular in lithographed writing; accompanied by a roll of thick white paper. The signature revealed the familiar name of Mr. Le Frank.

The circular set forth that the writer had won renown and a moderate income, as pianist and teacher of music. ‘A terrible accident, ladies and gentlemen, has injured my right hand, and has rendered amputation of two of my fingers necessary. Deprived for life of my

professional resources, I have but one means of subsistence left—viz :—collecting subscriptions for a song of my own composition. N.B.—The mutilated musician leaves the question of terms in the hands of the art-loving public, and will do himself the honour of calling to-morrow.’

Good-natured Mr. Gallilee left a sovereign to be given to the victim of circumstances—and then set forth for Lord Northlake’s house. He and Ovid had arranged that Zo was to be taken to see Carmina that day.

On his way through the streets, he was met by Mr. Mool. The lawyer looked at the song under his friend’s arm. ‘What’s that you’re taking such care of?’ he asked. ‘It looks like music. A new piece for the young ladies—eh?’

Mr. Gallilee explained. Mr. Mool struck his stick on the pavement, as the nearest available means of expressing indignation.

‘Never let another farthing of your money

get into that rascal's pocket! It's no merit of his that the poor old Italian nurse has not made her appearance in the police reports.'

With this preface, Mr. Mool related the circumstances under which Mr. Le Frank had met with his accident. 'His first proceeding when they discharged him from the hospital,' continued the lawyer, 'was to summon Teresa before a magistrate. Fortunately she showed the summons to me. I appeared for her, provided with a plan of the rooms which spoke for itself; and I put two questions to the complainant. What business had he in another person's room? and why was his hand in that other person's cupboard? The reporter kindly left the case unrecorded; and when the fellow ended by threatening the poor woman outside the court, we bound him over to keep the peace. I have my eye on him—and I'll catch him yet, under the Vagrant Act!'

CHAPTER LXI.

AIDED by time, care, and skill, Carmina had gained strength enough to pass some hours of the day in the sitting-room; reclining in an invalid-chair invented for her by Ovid. The welcome sight of Zo—brightened and developed by happy autumn days passed in Scotland—brought a deep flush to her face, and quickened the pulse which Ovid was touching, under pretence of holding her hand. These signs of excessive nervous sensibility warned him to limit the child's visit to a short space of time. Neither Miss Minerva nor Teresa were in the room: Carmina could have Zo all to herself.

‘Now, my dear,’ she said, in a kiss, ‘tell me about Scotland.’

‘Scotland,’ Zo answered with dignity, ‘belongs to uncle Northlake. He pays for everything ; and I’m Missus.’

‘It’s true,’ said Mr. Gallilee, bursting with pride. ‘My lord says it’s no use having a will of your own where Zo is. When he introduces her to anybody on the estate, he says, “Here’s the Missus.”’

Mr. Gallilee’s youngest daughter listened critically to the parental testimony. ‘You see he knows,’ she said to Ovid. ‘There’s nothing to laugh at.’

Carmina tried another question. ‘Did you think of me, dear, when you were far away?’

‘Think of you?’ Zo repeated. ‘You’re to sleep in my bedroom when we go back to Scotland—and I’m to be out of bed, and one of ’em, when you eat your first Scotch dinner. Shall I tell you what you’ll see on the table? You’ll see a big brown steaming bag in a dish—and you’ll see me slit it with a knife—and the

bag's fat inside will tumble out, all smoking hot and stinking. That's a Scotch dinner. Oh!' she cried, losing her dignity in the sudden interest of a new idea, 'oh, Carmina, do you remember the Italian boy, and his song?'

Here was one of those tests of her memory for trifles, applied with a child's happy abruptness, for which Ovid had been waiting. He listened eagerly. To his unutterable relief, Carmina laughed.

'Of course I remember it!' she said. 'Who could forget the boy who sings and grins and says *Gimmee haypenny*?'

'That's it!' cried Zo. 'The boy's song was a good one in its way. I've learnt a better in Scotland. You've heard of Donald, haven't you?'

'No.'

Zo turned indignantly to her father. 'Why didn't you tell her of Donald?'

Mr. Gallilee humbly admitted that he was in fault. Carmina asked who Donald was, and

what he was like. Zo unconsciously tested her memory for the second time.

‘You know that day,’ she said, ‘when Joseph had an errand at the grocer’s and I went along with him, and Miss Minerva said I was a vulgar child?’

Carmina’s memory recalled this new trifle, without an effort. ‘I know,’ she answered; ‘you told me Joseph and the grocer weighed you in the great scales.’

Zo delighted Ovid by trying her again. ‘When they put me into the scales, Carmina, what did I weigh?’

‘Nearly four stone, dear.’

‘Quite four stone. Donald weighs fourteen. What do you think of that?’

Mr. Gallilee once more offered his testimony. ‘The biggest Piper on my lord’s estate,’ he began, ‘comes of a Highland family, and was removed to the Lowlands by my lord’s father. A great player——’

‘ And *my* friend,’ Zo explained, stopping her father in full career. ‘ He takes snuff out of a cow’s horn. He shovels it up his fat nose with a spoon, like this. His nose wags. He says, “ Try my sneeshin.” Sneeshin’s Scotch for snuff. He boos till he’s nearly double when uncle Northlake speaks to him. Boos is Scotch for bows. He skirls on the pipes—skirls means screeches. When you first hear him, he’ll make your stomach ache. You’ll get used to that—and you’ll find you like him. He wears a purse and a petticoat ; he never had a pair of trousers on in his life ; there’s no pride about him. Say you’re my friend and he’ll let you smack his legs——’

Here, Ovid was obliged to bring the biography of Donald to a close. Carmina’s enjoyment of Zo was becoming too keen for her strength ; her bursts of laughter grew louder and louder—the wholesome limit of excitement was being rapidly passed. ‘ Tell us about

your cousins,' he said, by way of effecting a diversion.

‘The big ones?’ Zo asked.

‘No; the little ones, like you.’

‘Nice girls—they play at everything I tell ’em. Jolly boys—when they knock a girl down, they pick her up again, and clean her.’

Carmina was once more in danger of passing the limit. Ovid made another attempt to effect a diversion. Singing would be comparatively harmless in its effect—as he rashly supposed. ‘What’s that song you learnt in Scotland?’ he asked.

‘It’s Donald’s song,’ Zo replied. ‘*He* taught me.’

At the sound of Donald’s dreadful name, Ovid looked at his watch, and said there was no time for the song. Mr. Gallilee suddenly and seriously sided with his step-son. ‘How she got among the men after dinner,’ he said, ‘nobody knows. Lady Northlake has forbidden

Donald to teach her any more songs ; and I have requested him, as a favour to me, not to let her smack his legs. Come, my dear, it's time we were home again.'

Well intended by both gentlemen—but too late. Zo was ready for the performance ; her hat was cocked on one side ; her plump little arms were set akimbo ; her round eyes opened and closed facetiously in winks worthy of a low comedian. ' I'm Donald,' she announced : and burst out with the song : '*We're gayly yet, we're gayly yet ; We're not very fou, but we're gayly yet : Then sit ye awhile, and tippie a bit ; For we're not very fou, but we're gayly yet.*' She snatched up Carmina's medicine glass, and waved it over her head with a Bacchanalian screech. ' Fill a brimmer, Tammie ! Here's to Redshanks ! '

' And pray who is Redshanks ? ' asked a lady, standing in the doorway.

Zo turned round—and instantly collapsed.

A terrible figure, associated with lessons and punishments, stood before her. The convivial friend of Donald, the established Missus of Lord Northlake, disappeared—and a polite pupil took their place. ‘If you please, Miss Minerva, Redshanks is nickname for a Highlander.’ Who would have recognised the singer of ‘We’re gayly yet,’ in the subdued young person who made that reply?

The door opened again. Another disastrous intrusion? Yes, another! Teresa appeared this time—caught Zo up in her arms—and gave the child a kiss that was heard all over the room. ‘Ah, mia Giocosa!’ cried the old nurse—too happy to speak in any language but her own. ‘What does that mean?’ Zo asked, settling her ruffled petticoats. ‘It means,’ said Teresa, who prided herself on her English, ‘Ah, my Jolly.’ This to a young lady who could slit a haggis! This to the only person in Scotland, privileged to smack Donald’s legs!

Zo turned to her father, and recovered her dignity. Maria herself could hardly have spoken with more severe propriety. 'I wish to go home,' said Zo.

Ovid had only to look at Carmina, and to see the necessity of immediate compliance with his little sister's wishes. No more laughing, no more excitement, for that day. He led Zo out himself, and resigned her to her father at the door of his rooms on the ground floor.

Cheered already by having got away from Miss Minerva and the nurse, Zo desired to know who lived downstairs; and, hearing that these were Ovid's rooms, insisted on seeing them. The three went in together.

Ovid drew Mr. Gallilee into a corner. 'I'm easier about Carmina now,' he said. 'The failure of her memory doesn't extend backwards. It begins with the shock to her brain, on the day when Teresa removed her to this

house—and it will end, I feel confident, with the end of her illness.’

Mr. Gallilee’s attention suddenly wandered. ‘Zo!’ he called out, ‘don’t touch your brother’s papers.’

The one object that had excited the child’s curiosity was the writing-table. Dozens of sheets of paper were scattered over it, covered with writing, blotted and interlined. Some of these leaves had overflowed the table, and found a resting-place on the floor. Zo was amusing herself by picking them up. ‘Well!’ she said, handing them obediently to Ovid, ‘I’ve had many a rap on the knuckles for writing not half as bad as yours.’

Hearing his daughter’s remark, Mr. Gallilee became interested in looking at the fragments of manuscript. ‘What an awful mess!’ he exclaimed. ‘May I try if I can read a bit?’ Ovid smiled. ‘Try by all means; you will make one useful discovery at least—you will

see that the most patient men on the face of the civilised earth are Printers !’

Mr. Gallilee tried a page—and gave it up before he turned giddy. ‘Is it fair to ask what this is ?’

‘Something easy to feel, and hard to express,’ Ovid answered. ‘These ill-written lines are my offering of gratitude to the memory of an unknown and unhappy man.’

‘The man you told me of, who died at Montreal ?’

‘Yes.’

‘You never mentioned his name.’

‘His last wishes forbade me to mention it to any living creature. God knows there were pitiable, most pitiable, reasons for his dying unknown ! The stone over his grave only bears his initials, and the date of his death. But,’ said Ovid, kindling with enthusiasm, as he laid his hand on his manuscript, ‘the discoveries of this great physician shall benefit humanity !’

And my debt to him shall be acknowledged, with the admiration and the devotion that I truly feel !’

‘ In a book ? ’ asked Mr. Gallilee.

‘ In a book that is now being printed. You will see it before the New Year.’

Finding nothing to amuse her in the sitting-room, Zo had tried the bedroom next. She now returned to Ovid, dragging after her a long white staff that looked like an Alpen-stock. ‘ What’s this ? ’ she asked. ‘ A broom-stick ? ’

‘ A specimen of rare Canadian wood, my dear. Would you like to have it ? ’

Zo took the offer quite seriously. She looked with longing eyes at the specimen, three times as tall as herself—and shook her head. ‘ I’m not big enough for it, yet,’ she said. ‘ Look at it, papa ! Benjulia’s stick is nothing to this.’

That name—on the child’s lips—had a

sound revolting to Ovid. 'Don't speak of him !' he said irritably.

'Mustn't I speak of him,' Zo asked, 'when I want him to tickle me ?'

Ovid beckoned to her father. 'Take her away now,' he whispered—'and never let her see that man again.'

The warning was needless. The man's destiny had decreed that he and Zo were never more to meet.

CHAPTER LXII.

BENJULIA'S servants had but a dull time of it, poor souls, in the lonely house. Towards the end of December, they subscribed among themselves to buy one of those wonderful Christmas Numbers—presenting year after year the same large-eyed ladies, long-legged lovers, corpulent children, snowy landscapes, and gluttonous merry-makings—which have become a national institution: say, the pictorial plum puddings of the English nation.

The servants had plenty of time to enjoy their genial newspaper, before the dining-room bell disturbed them.

For some weeks past, the master had again begun to spend the whole of his time in the

mysterious laboratory. On the rare occasions when he returned to the house, he was always out of temper. If the servants knew nothing else, they knew what these signs meant—the great man was harder at work than ever; and in spite of his industry, he was not getting on so well as usual.

On this particular evening, the bell rang at the customary time—and the cook (successor to the unfortunate creature with pretensions to beauty and sentiment) hastened to get the dinner ready.

The footman turned to the dresser, and took from it a little heap of newspapers; carefully counting them before he ventured to carry them upstairs. This was Doctor Benjulia's regular weekly supply of medical literature; and here, again, the mysterious man presented an incomprehensible problem to his fellow-creatures. He subscribed to every medical publication in England—and he never read

one of them ! The footman cut the leaves ; and the master, with his forefinger to help him, ran his eye up and down the pages ; apparently in search of some announcement that he never found—and, still more extraordinary, without showing the faintest sign of disappointment when he had done. Every week, he briskly shoved his unread periodicals into a huge basket, and sent them downstairs as waste paper.

The footman took up the newspapers and the dinner together—and was received with frowns and curses. He was abused for everything that he did in his own department, and for everything that the cook had done besides. ‘ Whatever the master’s working at,’ he announced, on returning to the kitchen, ‘ he’s farther away from hitting the right nail on the head than ever. Upon my soul, I think I shall have to give warning ! Let’s relieve our minds. Where’s the Christmas Number ? ’

Half an hour later, the servants were startled by a tremendous bang of the house-door which shook the whole building. The footman ran upstairs: the dining-room was empty; the master's hat was not on its peg in the hall; and the medical newspapers were scattered about in the wildest confusion. Close to the fender lay a crumpled leaf, torn out. Its position suggested that it had narrowly missed being thrown into the fire. The footman smoothed it out, and looked at it.

One side of the leaf contained a report of a lecture. This was dry reading. The footman tried the other side, and found a review of a new medical work.

This would have been dull reading too, but for an extract from a Preface, stating how the book came to be published, and what wonderful discoveries, relating to peoples' brains, it contained. There were some curious things said here—especially about a melancholy deathbed

at a place called Montreal—which made the Preface almost as interesting as a story. But what was there in this to hurry the master out of the house, as if the devil had been at his heels?

Doctor Benjulia's nearest neighbour was a small farmer named Gregg. He was taking a nap that evening, when his wife bounced into the room, and said, 'Here's the big doctor gone mad!' And there he was truly, at Mrs. Gregg's heels, clamouring to have the horse put to in the gig, and to be driven to London instantly. He said, 'Pay yourself what you please'—and opened his pocket-book, full of bank-notes. Mr. Gregg said, 'It seems, sir, this is a matter of life or death.' Whereupon he looked at Mr. Gregg—and considered a little—and, becoming quiet on a sudden, answered, 'Yes, it is.'

On the road to London, he never once spoke—except to himself—and then only from time to time.

It seemed, judging by what fell from him now and then, that he was troubled about a man and a letter. He had suspected the man all along ; but he had nevertheless given him the letter—and now it had ended in the letter turning out badly for Doctor Benjulia himself. Where he went to in London, it was not possible to say. Mr. Gregg's horse was not fast enough for him. As soon as he could find one, he took a cab.

The shopman of Mr. Barrable, the famous publisher of medical works, had just put up the shutters, and was going downstairs to his tea, when he heard a knocking at the shop door. The person proved to be a very tall man, in a violent hurry to buy Mr. Ovid Vere's new book. He said, by way of apology, that he was in that line himself, and that his name was Benjulia. The shopman knew him by reputation, and sold him the book. He was in such a hurry to read it, that he actually began

in the shop. It was necessary to tell him that business hours were over. Hearing this, he ran out, and told the cabman to drive as fast as possible to Pall Mall.

The library waiter at Doctor Benjulia's Club found him in the library, busy with a book.

He was quite alone; the members, at that hour of the evening, being generally at dinner, or in the smoking-room. The man whose business it was to attend to the fires, went in during the night, from time to time, and always found him in the same corner. It began to get late. He finished his reading; but it seemed to make no difference. There he sat—wide awake—holding his closed book on his knee, seemingly lost in his own thoughts. This went on till it was time to close the Club. They were obliged to disturb him. He said nothing; and went slowly down into the hall, leaving his book behind him. It was an awful night, raining and sleeting—but he took no notice of the weather.

When they fetched a cab, the driver refused to take him to where he lived, on such a night as that. He only said, 'Very well; go to the nearest hotel.'

The night porter at the hotel let in a tall gentleman, and showed him into one of the bedrooms kept ready for persons arriving late. Having no luggage, he paid the charges beforehand. About eight o'clock in the morning, he rang for the waiter—who observed that his bed had not been slept in. All he wanted for breakfast was the strongest coffee that could be made. It was not strong enough to please him when he tasted it; and he had some brandy put in. He paid, and was liberal to the waiter, and went away.

The policeman on duty, that day, whose beat included the streets at the back of Fairfield Gardens, noticed in one of them, a tall gentleman walking backwards and forwards, and looking from time to time at one particular

house. When he passed that way again, there was the gentleman still patrolling the street, and still looking towards the same house. The policeman waited a little, and watched. The place was a respectable lodging house, and the stranger was certainly a gentleman, though a queer one to look at. It was not the policeman's business to interfere on suspicion, except in the case of notoriously bad characters. So, though he did think it odd, he went on again.

Between twelve and one o'clock in the afternoon, Ovid left his lodgings, to go to the neighbouring livery stables, and choose an open carriage. The sun was shining, and the air was brisk and dry, after the stormy night. It was just the day when he might venture to take Carmina out for a drive.

On his way down the street, he heard footsteps behind him, and felt himself touched on the shoulder. He turned—and discovered Benjulia. On the point of speaking resentfully,

he restrained himself. There was something in the wretch's face that struck him with horror.

Benjulia said, 'I won't keep you long; I want to know one thing. Will she live or die?'

'Her life is safe—I hope.'

'Through your new mode of treatment?'

His eyes and his voice said more than his words. Ovid instantly knew that he had seen the book; and that the book had forestalled him in the discovery to which he had devoted his life. Was it possible to pity a man whose hardened nature never pitied others? All things are possible to a large heart. Ovid shrank from answering him.

Benjulia spoke again.

'When we met that night at my garden gate,' he said, 'you told me my life should answer for her life, if she died. My neglect has not killed her—and you have no need to keep your word. But I don't get off, Mr. Ovid Vere, without paying the penalty. You have

taken something from me, which was dearer than life. I wished to tell you that—I have no more to say.’

Ovid silently offered his hand.

Benjulia’s head drooped in thought. The generous protest of the man whom he had injured, spoke in that outstretched hand. He looked at Ovid.

‘No!’ he said—and walked away.

Leaving the street, he went round to Fair field Gardens, and rang the bell at Mr. Gallilee’s door. The bell was answered by a polite old woman—a stranger to him among the servants.

‘Is Zo in the house?’ he inquired.

‘Nobody’s in the house, sir. It’s to be let, if you please, as soon as the furniture can be moved.’

‘Do you know where Zo is? I mean, Mr. Gallilee’s youngest child.’

‘I’m sorry to say, sir, I’m not acquainted with the family.’

He waited at the door, apparently hesitating what to do next. 'I'll go upstairs,' he said suddenly; 'I want to look at the house. You needn't go with me; I know my way.'

'Thank you kindly, sir!'

He went straight to the schoolroom.

The repellent melancholy of an uninhabited place had fallen on it already. The plain furniture was not worth taking care of: it was battered and old, and left to dust and neglect. There were two common deal writing desks, formerly used by the two girls. One of them was covered with splashes of ink: varied here and there by barbarous caricatures of faces, in which dots and strokes represented eyes, noses, and mouths. He knew whose desk this was, and opened the cover of it. In the recess beneath were soiled tables of figures, torn maps, and dogseared writing books. The ragged paper cover of one of these last, bore on its inner side a grotesquely imperfect inscription:

—*my cop book 20.* He tore off the cover, and put it in the breast pocket of his coat.

‘I should have liked to tickle her once more,’ he thought, as he went down stairs again. The polite old woman opened the door, curtsying deferentially. He gave her half a crown. ‘God bless you, sir!’ she burst out, in a gush of gratitude.

He checked himself, on the point of stepping into the street, and looked at her with some curiosity. ‘Do you believe in God?’ he asked.

The old woman was even capable of making a confession of faith politely. ‘Yes, sir,’ she said, ‘if you have no objection.’

He stepped into the street. ‘I wonder whether she is right?’ he thought. ‘It doesn’t matter; I shall soon know.’

The servants were honestly glad to see him, when he got home. They had taken it in turn to sit up through the night; knowing his

regular habits, and feeling the dread that some accident had happened. Never before had they seen him so fatigued. He dropped helplessly into his chair ; his gigantic body shook with shivering fits. The footman begged him to take some refreshment. ' Brandy, and raw eggs,' he said. These being brought to him, he told them to wait until he rang—and locked the door when they went out.

After waiting until the short winter daylight was at an end, the footman ventured to knock, and ask if the master wanted lights. He replied that he had lit the candles for himself. No smell of tobacco smoke came from the room ; and he had let the day pass without going to the laboratory. These were portentous signs. The footman said to his fellow servants, ' There's something wrong.' The women looked at each other in vague terror. One of them said, ' Hadn't we better give notice to leave?' And the other whispered a

question : ‘Do you think he’s committed a crime?’

Towards ten o’clock, the bell rang at last. Immediately afterwards they heard him calling to them from the hall. ‘I want you, all three, up here.’

They went up together—the two women anticipating a sight of horror, and keeping close to the footman.

The master was walking quietly backwards and forwards in the room : the table had pen and ink on it, and was covered with writings. He spoke to them in his customary tones ; there was not the slightest appearance of agitation in his manner.

‘I mean to leave this house, and go away,’ he began. ‘You are dismissed from my service, for that reason only. Take your written characters from the table ; read them, and say if there is anything to complain of.’ There was nothing to complain of. On another part of

the table there were three little heaps of money. 'A month's wages for each of you,' he explained, 'in place of a month's warning. I wish you good luck.' One of the women (the one who had suggested giving notice to leave) began to cry. He took no notice of this demonstration, and went on. 'I want two of you to do me a favour before we part. You will please witness the signature of my Will.' The sensitive servant drew back directly. 'No!' she said, 'I couldn't do it. I never heard the Death-Watch before in winter time—I heard it all last night.'

The other two witnessed the signature. They observed that the Will was a very short one. It was impossible not to notice the only legacy left; the words crossed the paper, just above the signatures, and only occupied two lines: 'I leave to Zoe, youngest daughter of Mr. John Gallilee, of Fairfield Gardens, London, everything absolutely of which I die possessed.'

Excepting the formal introductory phrases, and the statement relating to the witnesses—both copied from a handy book of law, lying open on the table—this was the Will.

The female servants were allowed to go downstairs; after having been informed that they were to leave the next morning. The footman was detained in the dining-room.

‘I am going to the laboratory,’ the master said; ‘and I want a few things carried to the door.’

The big basket for waste paper, three times filled with letters and manuscripts; the books; the medicine chest; and the stone jar of oil from the kitchen—these, the master and the man removed together; setting them down at the laboratory door. It was a still cold starlight winter’s night. The intermittent shriek of a railway whistle in the distance, was the only sound that disturbed the quiet of the time.

‘Good night!’ said the master.

The man returned the salute, and walked back to the house, closing the front door. He was now more firmly persuaded than ever that something was wrong. In the hall, the women were waiting for him. ‘What *does* it mean?’ they asked. ‘Keep quiet,’ he said; ‘I’m going to see.’

In another minute he was posted at the back of the house, behind the edge of the wall. Looking out from this place, he could see the light of the lamps in the laboratory streaming through the open door, and the dark figure of the master coming and going, as he removed the objects left outside into the building. Then the door was shut, and nothing was visible but the dim glow that found its way to the skylight, through the white blind inside.

He boldly crossed the open space of ground, resolved to try what his ears might discover, now that his eyes were useless. He posted

himself at the back of the laboratory, close to one of the side walls.

Now and then, he heard—what had reached his ears when he had been listening on former occasions—the faint whining cries of animals. These were followed by new sounds. Three smothered shrieks, succeeding each other at irregular intervals, made his blood run cold. Had three death-strokes been dealt on some suffering creatures, with the same sudden and terrible certainty? Silence, horrible silence, was all that answered. In the distant railway there was an interval of peace.

The door was opened again ; the flood of light streamed out on the darkness. Suddenly the yellow glow was spotted by the black figures of small swiftly-running creatures—perhaps cats, perhaps rabbits—escaping from the laboratory. The tall form of the master followed slowly, and stood revealed watching the flight of the animals. In a moment more,

the last of the liberated creatures came out—a large dog, limping as if one of its legs was injured. It stopped as it passed the master, and tried to fawn on him. He threatened it with his hand. ‘Be off with you, like the rest!’ he said. The dog slowly crossed the flow of light, and was swallowed up in darkness.

The last of them that could move was gone. The death shrieks of the others had told their fate.

But still, there stood the master alone—a grand black figure, with its head turned up to the stars. The minutes followed one another: the servant waited, and watched him. The solitary man had a habit, well known to those about him, of speaking to himself; not a word escaped him now; his upturned head never moved; the bright wintry heaven held him spell-bound.

At last, the change came. Once more the

silence was broken by the scream of the railway whistle.

He started like a person suddenly roused from deep sleep, and went back into the laboratory. The last sound then followed—the locking and bolting of the door.

The servant left his hiding-place: his master's secret, was no secret now. He hated himself for eating that master's bread, and earning that master's money. One of the ignorant masses, this man! Mere sentiment had a strange hold on his stupid mind; the remembrance of the poor wounded dog, companionable and forgiving under cruel injuries, cut into his heart like a knife. His thought, at that moment, was an act of treason to the royalty of Knowledge,—‘I wish to God I could lame *him*, as he has lamed the dog!’ Another fanatic! another fool! Oh, Science, be merciful to the fanatics, and the fools!

When he got back to the house, the women

were still on the look-out for him. 'Don't speak to me now,' he said. 'Get to your beds And, mind this—let's be off to-morrow morning before *he* can see us.'

There was no sleep for him when he went to his own bed.

The remembrance of the dog tormented him. The other lesser animals were active; capable of enjoying their liberty and finding shelter for themselves. Where had the maimed creature found a refuge, on that bitter night? Again, and again, and again, the question forced its way into his mind. He could endure it no longer. Cautiously and quickly—in dread of his extraordinary conduct being perhaps discovered by the women—he dressed himself, and opened the house door to look for the dog.

Out of the darkness on the step, there rose something dark. He put out his hand. A persuasive tongue, gently licking it, pleaded

for a word of welcome. The crippled animal could only have got to the door in one way; the gate which protected the house-enclosure must have been left open. First giving the dog a refuge in the kitchen, the footman—rigidly performing his last duties—went to close the gate.

At his first step into the enclosure he stopped panic-stricken.

The starlit sky over the laboratory was veiled in murky red. Roaring flame, and spouting showers of sparks, poured through the broken skylight. Voices from the farm raised the first cry—‘Fire! fire!’

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At the inquest, the evidence suggested suspicion of incendiarism and suicide. The papers, the books, the oil betrayed themselves as combustible materials, carried into the place for a purpose. The medicine chest was known (by its use in cases of illness among the servants)

to contain opium. Adjourned inquiry elicited that the laboratory was not insured, and that the deceased was in comfortable circumstances. Where were the motives? One intelligent man, who had drifted into the jury, was satisfied with the evidence. He held that the desperate wretch had some reason of his own for first poisoning himself, and then setting fire to the scene of his labours. Having a majority of eleven against him, the wise jurymen consented to a merciful verdict of death by misadventure. The hideous remains of what had once been Benjulia, found Christian burial. His brethren of the torture-table, attended the funeral in large numbers. Vivisection had been beaten on its own field of discovery. They honoured the martyr who had fallen in their cause.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE life of the New Year was still only numbered by weeks, when a modest little marriage was celebrated—without the knowledge of the neighbours, without a crowd in the church, and even without a wedding-breakfast.

Mr. Gallilee (honoured with the office of giving away the bride) drew Ovid into a corner before they left the house. ‘She still looks delicate, poor dear,’ he said. ‘Do you really consider her to be well again?’

‘As well as she will ever be,’ Ovid answered. ‘Before I returned to her, time had been lost which no skill and no devotion can regain. But the prospect has its bright side. Past

events which might have cast their shadow over all her life to come, have left no trace in her memory. I will make her a happy woman. Leave the rest to me.'

Teresa and Mr. Mool were the witnesses; Maria and Zo were the bridesmaids: they had only waited to go to church, until one other eagerly expected person joined them. There was a general inquiry for Miss Minerva. Carmina astonished everybody, from the bridegroom downwards, by announcing that circumstances prevented her best and dearest friend from being present. She smiled and blushed as she took Ovid's arm. 'When we are man and wife, and I am quite sure of you,' she whispered, 'I will tell *you*, what nobody else must know. In the meantime, darling, if you can give Frances the highest place in your estimation—next to me—you will only do justice to the noblest woman that ever lived.'

She had a little note bidden in her bosom, while she said those words. It was dated on the morning of her marriage: ‘When you return from the honeymoon, Carmina, I shall be the first friend who opens her arms and her heart to you. Forgive me if I am not with you to-day. We are all human, my dear—don’t tell your husband.’

It was her last weakness. Carmina had no excuses to make for an absent guest, when the first christening was celebrated. On that occasion the happy young mother betrayed a conjugal secret to her dearest friend. It was at Ovid’s suggestion that the infant daughter was called by Miss Minerva’s christian name.

But when the married pair went away to their happy new life, there was a little cloud of sadness, which vanished in sunshine—thanks to Zo. Polite Mr. Mool, bent on making himself agreeable to everybody, paid his court to

Mr. Gallilee's youngest daughter. 'And who do you mean to marry, my little Miss, when you grow up?' the lawyer asked with feeble drollery.

Zo looked at him in grave surprise. 'That's all settled,' she said; 'I've got a man waiting for me.'

'Oh, indeed! And who may he be?'

'Donald!'

'That's a very extraordinary child of yours,' Mr. Mool said to his friend, as they walked away together.

Mr. Gallilee absently agreed. 'Has my message been given to my wife?' he asked.

Mr. Mool sighed and shook his head. 'Messages from her husband are as completely thrown away on her,' he answered, 'as if she was still in the asylum. In justice to yourself, consent to an amicable separation, and I will arrange it.'

‘Have you seen her?’

‘I insisted on it, before I met her lawyers. She declares herself to be an infamously injured woman—and, upon my honour, she proves it, from her own point of view. “My husband never came near me in my illness, and took my children away by stealth. My children were so perfectly ready to be removed from their mother, that neither of them had the decency to write me a letter. My niece contemplated shamelessly escaping to my son, and wrote him a letter vilifying his mother in the most abominable terms. And Ovid completes the round of ingratitude by marrying the girl who has behaved in this way.” I declare to you, Gallilee, that was how she put it! “Am I to blame,” she said, “for believing that story about my brother’s wife? It’s acknowledged that she gave the man money—the rest is a matter of opinion. Was I wrong to lose my temper, and say what I did say to this so-called

niece of mine? Yes, I was wrong, there : it is the only case in which there is a fault to find with me. But had I no provocation? Have I not suffered? Don't try to look as if you pitied me. I stand in no need of pity. But I owe a duty to my own self-respect; and that duty compels me to speak plainly. I will have nothing more to do with the members of my heartless family. The rest of my life is devoted to intellectual society, and the ennobling pursuits of science. Let me hear no more, sir, of you or your employers." She rose like a queen, and bowed me out of the room. I declare to you, my flesh creeps when I think of her.'

'If I leave her now,' said Mr. Gallilee, 'I leave her in debt.'

'Give me your word of honour not to mention what I am going to tell you,' Mr. Mool rejoined. 'If she needs money, the kindest man in the world has offered me a blank

cheque to fill in for her—and his name is Ovid Vere.’

As the season advanced, two social entertainments which offered the most complete contrast to each other, were given in London on the same evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Ovid Vere had a little dinner party to celebrate their return. Teresa (advanced to the dignity of housekeeper) insisted on stuffing the tomatoes and cooking the macaroni with her own hand. The guests were Lord and Lady Northlake; Maria and Zo; Miss Minerva and Mr. Mool. Mr. Gallilee was present as one of the household. While he was in London, he and his children lived under Ovid’s roof. When they went to Scotland, Mr. Gallilee had a cottage of his own (which he insisted on buying) in Lord Northlake’s park. He and Zo drank too much champagne at dinner. The father made a

speech ; and the daughter sang, ‘ We’re gayly yet.’

In another quarter of London, there was a party which filled the street with carriages, and which was reported in the newspapers the next morning.

Mrs. Gallilee was At Home to Science. The Professors of the civilised universe rallied round their fair friend. France, Italy, and Germany bewildered the announcing servants with a perfect Babel of names—and Great Britain was grandly represented. Those three superhuman men, who had each had a peep behind the veil of creation, and discovered the mystery of life, attended the party and became centres of three circles—the circle that believed in ‘protoplasm,’ the circle that believed in ‘bioplasm,’ and the circle that believed in ‘atomised charges of electricity, conducted into the system by the oxygen of respiration.’ Lectures and demonstrations went on all through

the evening, all over the magnificent room engaged for the occasion. In one corner, a fair philosopher in blue velvet and point lace, took the Sun in hand facetiously. 'The sun's life, my friends, begins with a nebulous infancy and a gaseous childhood.' In another corner, a gentleman of shy and retiring manners converted 'radiant energy into sonorous vibrations'—themselves converted into sonorous poppings by waiters and champagne bottles at the supper table. In the centre of the room, the hostess solved the serious problem of diet; viewed as a method of assisting tadpoles to develop themselves into frogs—with such cheering results that these last lively beings joined the guests on the carpet, and gratified intelligent curiosity by explorations on the stairs. Within the space of one remarkable evening, three hundred illustrious people were charmed, surprised, instructed, and amused; and when Science went home, it left a *conversazione* (for

once) with its stomach well filled. At two in the morning, Mrs. Gallilee sat down in the empty room, and said to the learned friend who lived with her,

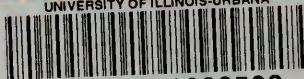
‘At last, I’m a happy woman!’

THE END.

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